

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
ISSUE 27
FEBRUARY 1990
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EXCLUSIVE
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ANHAK DRAKKHEN AGHNAHIR HURTHD !

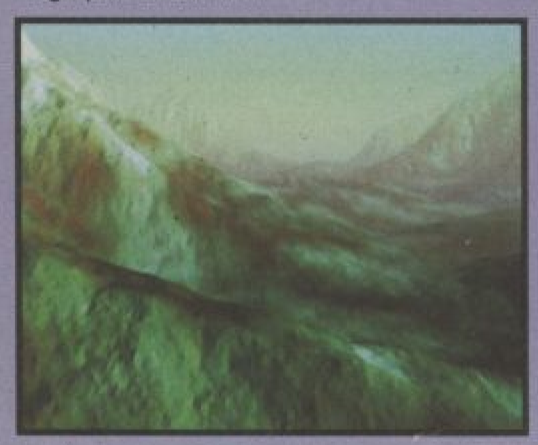
Screenshots Atari ST.

ATARI ST
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Magic is going to die.
Faces and bodies are transforming.
The island spreads its evil irremediably.
Soon, the old world will disappear.
You must prevent the prophecy
before it is fulfilled.
Magic, it is the life of our world.
The Emperor has told you :
"If you fail, don't come back !"
INFOGRAMES

The Games machine





SPACE ACE....38

Prepare your senses for overload as you battle to save Earth against the evil Commander Borf in Don Bluth's classic laser disc adventure. Sights and sounds like you've never seen or heard before.

GAMES INDEX

1) POWER BOAT

Accolade

Release: January

Formats: Initially PC, followed by Amiga.

Power Boat was originally designed under the title Heat Wave. The game puts you at the helm of a 600 HP superboat capable of speeds exceeding 200mph. If in-boat heroics prove too much you can always take to a helicopter for an overhead view. Miami Vice was never this good.



2) ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS

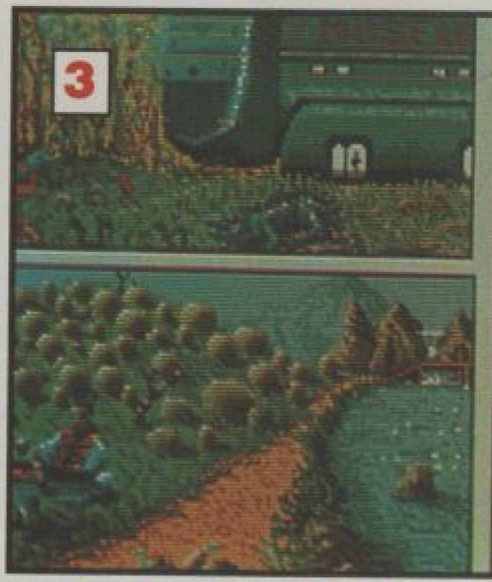
Domark/Tengen

Release: January

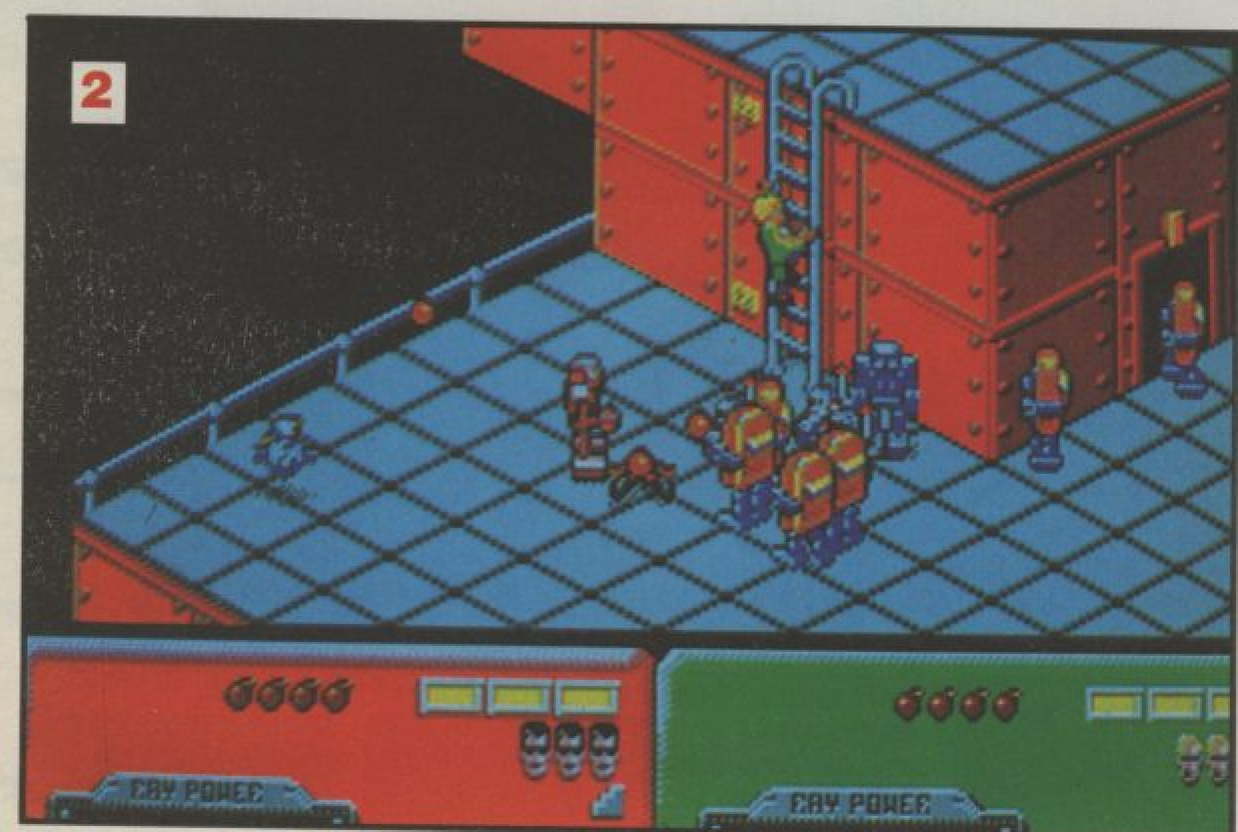
Formats: IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum, Amstrad.

Escape heralds a new era of Domark Tengen conversions in that the coin-op of the same name has yet to be seem in the arcades. The only other company to have such an arrangement with their coin-op counterpart is US Gold with Capcom. Domark's latest conversion enters the realms of science-fiction in a comic book environment. Control Jake and Duke as they land on the surface of Planet X in an attempt to rescue a team of humans who have been captured by its inhabitants and forced into producing an evil robot army.

Their main objective is to seek out and rescue the beautiful Professor Sarah Bellum, although setting free other







hostages along the way would be humane too. Stock up on food and pick up any bombs and other special weapons as the locals aren't too friendly. Each level is packed with puzzles, ensuring a slow and challenging quest.

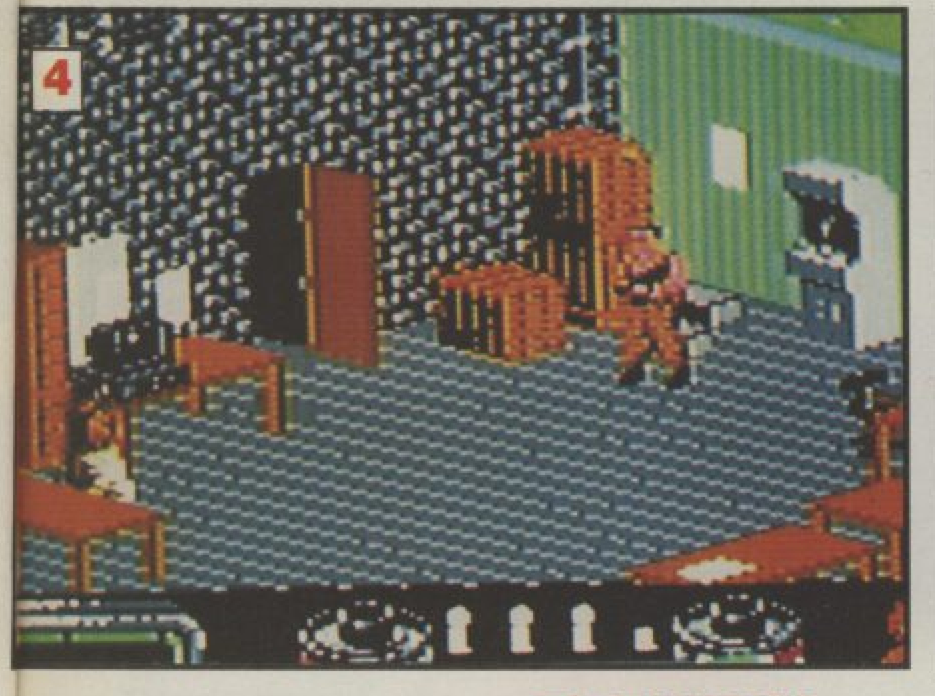
3) B.A.T.

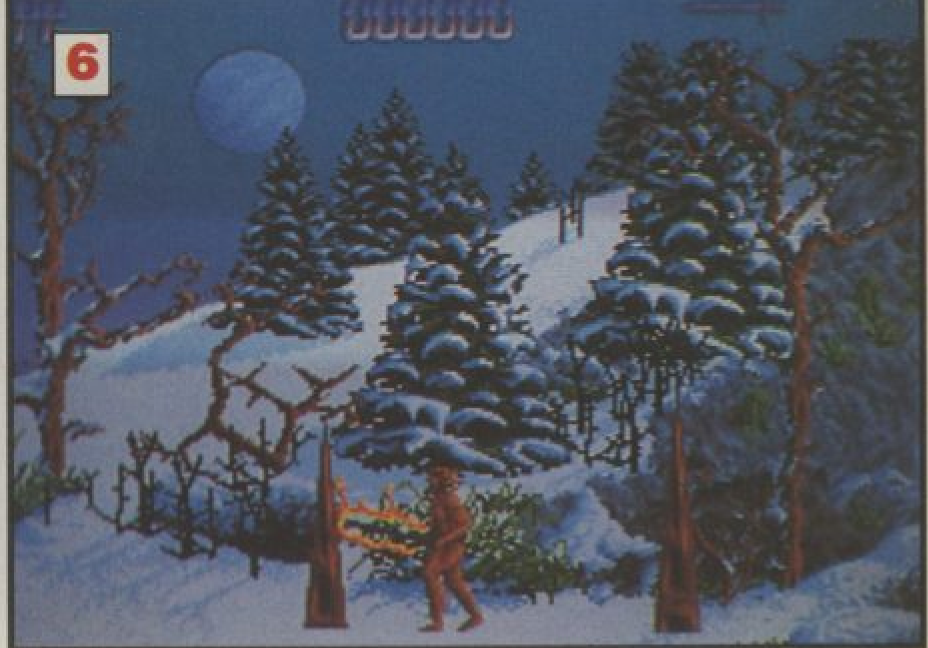
Ubi Soft

Release: January

Formats: Atari ST.

Ubi Soft are one of the top French software companies exporting software to the UK. Their previous successes include Skateball and Twinworld. B.A.T. is the latest in a long line of roleplaying/adventures to come out of France. It is named after the galaxy's main law-enforcement agency in the 22nd century. An interstellar





incident has occured on the planet Terrapolis, the only planet that produces the essential energy material Khergol.

The evil genius, Vrangor, and his slimey henchman, Merigo, have taken control of the planet and threaten to blow it up unless they are given its property rights — and thus total control over Khergol production. As an agent for B.A.T., you must seek out the evil duo and foil their dastardly plans. But take care, there's a mole in the B.A.T. organisation who's feeding plans of your every move to Vrangor. Eliminate him first and the rest will be a lot easier...

4) VENDETTA

System 3

Release: January

Formats: Initially on Spectrum and C64, 16-bit versions to follow later.

Pretty girl gets kidnapped by evil men. Boyfriend is out for revenge. Drives to hideout in F40 (Road Blasters stage) and explores area in search of girl (Last Ninja II stage). Boyfriend, after solving various puzzles and killing numerous kidnappers, frees girl and all live happily ever after...



5) EMLYN HUGHES ARCADE QUIZ

Audiogenic

Release: January

Formats: IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX, BBC.

Based on the old pub game format of trivia questions, Arcade Quiz is Audiogenic's second game in conjunction with Emlyn Hughes. The first, Emlyn Hughes International Soccer, stayed in the Gallup charts for 45 weeks (only beaten by RoboCop) and is currently being programmed for the Amiga and Atari ST. Emlyn Hughes Arcade Quiz contains over 2200 questions in six categories, bonus, cash and master games, and music and sound effects by David Whittaker.

6+7) UNREAL

Ubi Soft

Release: January

Formats: Initially Atari ST.

Strange title, strange storyline. The Sleeper has sent out his servant Fragor to create a new environment on the planet Unreal. When nearing the planet, Fragor's ship is struck by a comet. Important, uncontrolled substances escape from the ship onto the planet and create an environmental catastrophe. Two immortal beings who were originally planned to balance good and evil on the planet are now fighting it out between themselves for total domination. Both have power over the elements and nothing can stop them.

However, a small valley on the planet escaped untouched by the powerful duo, and here landed a life-producing egg. The egg formed a peaceful world where its inhabitants could co-exist in harmony.

A friendly dragon came to visit two of its inhabitants, Isolda and Targan, regularly. Until one day the dragon failed to visit. While Isolda went looking for him, the evil master of Unreal captured her and vowed to marry her. Isolda promised to tie the knot if he spared the peaceful community in the valley.

On hearing the bad news, Targan accompanied the (now reappeared) dragon on visit to an old friendly magician who advises them that to get Isolda back they must destroy the four elements, and thus end the evil protector's tyranny. The equipment you'll need is a sword and some particles of the comet that originally caused the whole mess. Jump into Targan's shoes and onto the dragon's back then fly off to fight with your foe. Who's knows what will lie in store for you? (Who cares, it was a good build up, though!)

8) PLAYER MANAGER

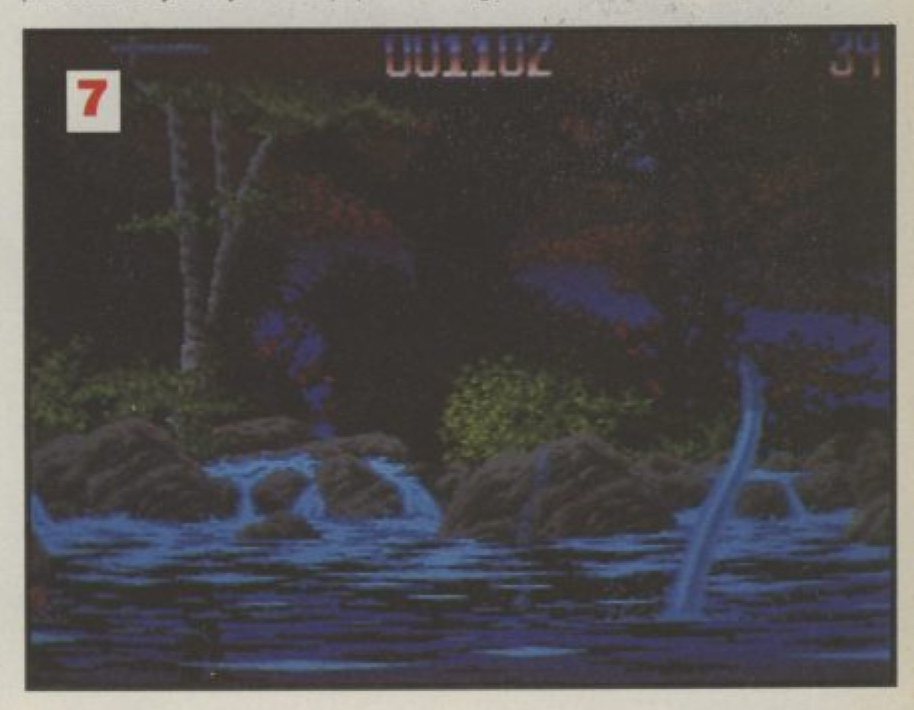
Anco

Release: January

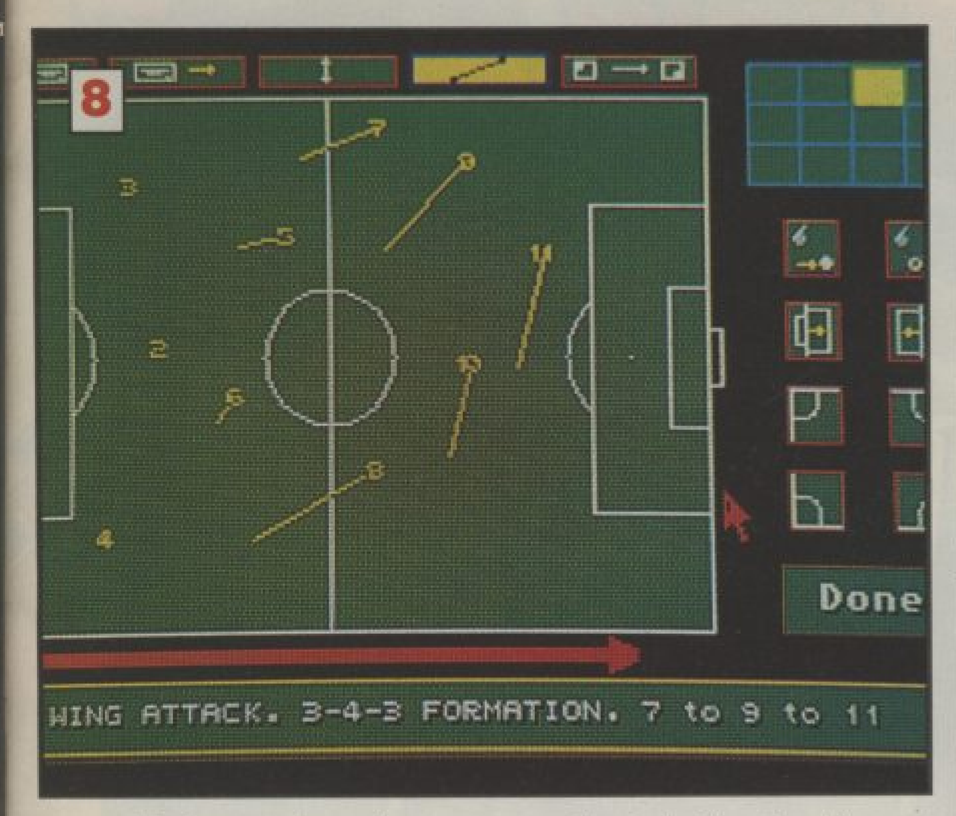
Formats: Amiga, ST.

Cross the most popular game of 1989, Kick Off, with the most popular football strategy game ever, Football Manager, and you've got the eagerly-awaited follow-up to Dino Dini's Kick Off, Player Manager.

As newly-appointed player-manager of a struggling third division side, you must take the no-hopers to the top of the league in as little time as possi-




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Arthur returns! The fearless knight is back in this stunning sequel to Ghosts 'n' Goblins (voted among the top 10 games of 1986). Three years have passed since the evil ones came to do their dirty work. Now they're back and they've captured Princess Hus, but our valiant knight Arthur is charging to the rescue against a formidable array of gruesome enemies and hairy hazards.
Atari ST, Amiga
Spectrum Cassette
Amstrad Cassette and Disk
CBM 64/128 Cassette and Disk
IAN NAYLOR
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Screen shots from Atari ST version.
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ble. Success depends on you blending the right players together and forming a team spirit that cannot be matched. Over 1000 players participate in the four division league. Each player has their own attributes of pace, stamina, aggression, mental and physical agility, resilience, and temperament. Each player also has a skill rating, judged on shooting, passing, tackling and keeping. Along with height, weight and age you certainly have a wide range of statistics to juggle with.

Pre-match practice and planning is essential, so there's an option to sketch out and try moves beforehand. Four well-proven tactics are provided although you may want to customise your own. A modified version of Kick Off displays the action, where you can either watch the match as a whole or concentrate on one player specifically (ideal for transfer-listed players). The money aspect of the club is left to the Board's directors, all you have to do is concentrate on the players and put together a winning side.





9) MIDWINTER

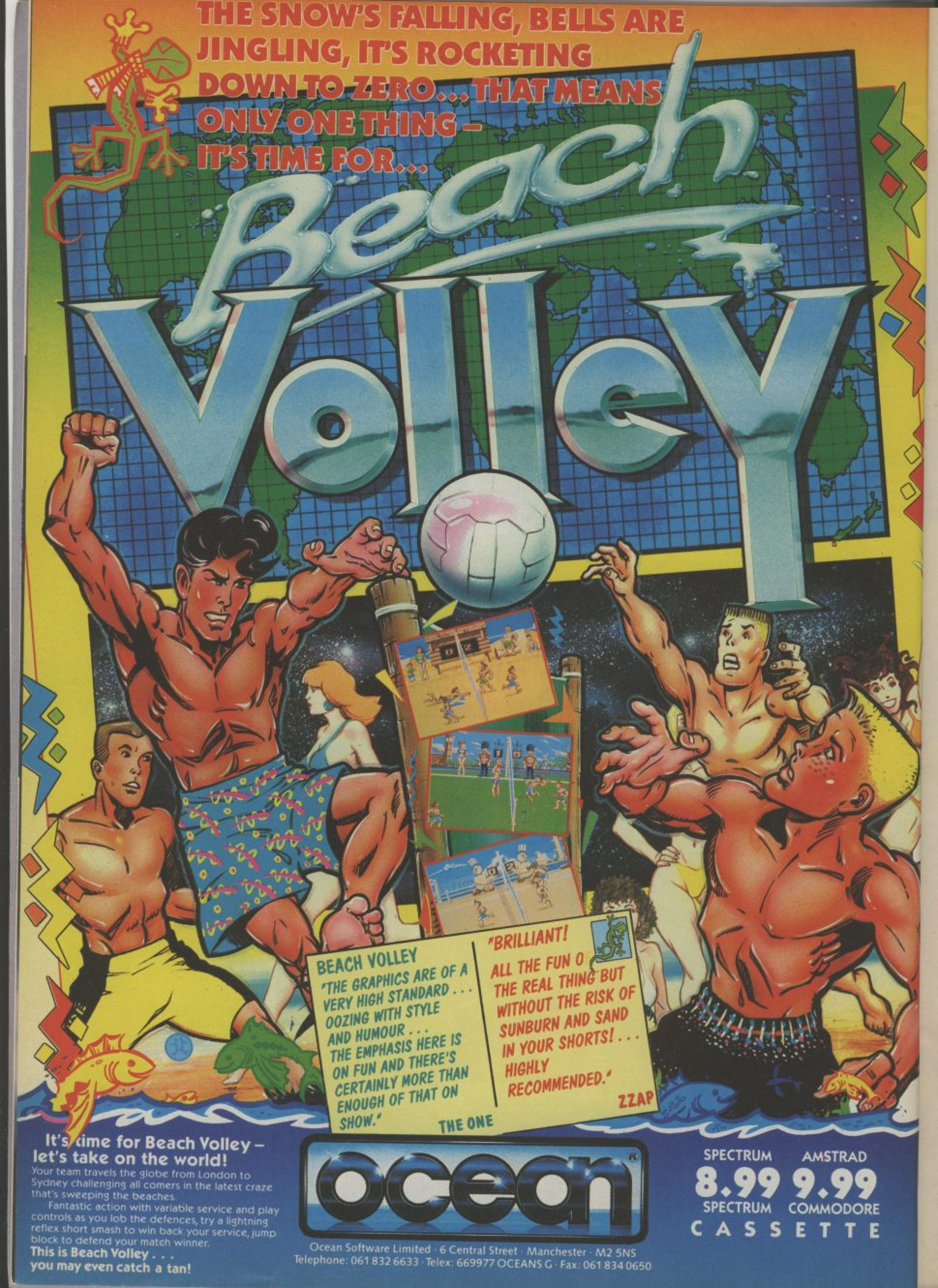
Rainbird

Release: January

Formats: IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST.

Mike Singleton (programmer of early Spectrum classics like Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge) has been conspicuous by his absence over the past few years. After a long time running complex play-by-mail games with his company Maelstrom Games, Mike is now ready to reveal his latest projects for MicroProse.

Apparently, Midwinter was conceived from MicroProse's new environmentally clean policy. They researched into what the world would be like in 50 years, the result was the 'exciting' prospect of an Ice Age. Midwinter is constructed around such an environment, with totally self-sufficient communities. Of course, even in this 'clean slate' environment, evil oppres-


THE SNOW'S FALLING, BELLS ARE JINGLING, IT'S ROCKETING DOWN TO ZERO... THAT MEANS ONLY ONE THING – IT'S TIME FOR...
Beach Volley
BEACH VOLLEY
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THE ONE
"BRILLIANT! ALL THE FUN O THE REAL THING BUT WITHOUT THE RISK OF SUNBURN AND SAND IN YOUR SHORTS! . . . HIGHLY RECOMMENDED."
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sors exist. As Captain Stark, leader of the Free Villages Peace Force, you must lead a mission across the icy wastelands to overthrow General Masterman and his forces. Midwinter promises to be 'original in concept', 'revolutionary in design', 'innovative in marketing' and 'the strategy/action game of the decade'. So it's probably not a bad little game...

10) WOLF-PACK

PSS/Mirrorsoft

Release: January

Formats: Initially IBM PC, followed later by Amiga and Atari ST.

PSS's follow up to Conflict Europe (the 16-bit version of Theatre Europe), Wolfpack concentrates on wartime naval activity and particularly the events of autumn 1942. Conflict Europe showed that the PSS team have got hold of the 16-bits and are using their capabilities, Wolfpack is the next step in their progressive use. The game contains digitised rotations of actual ships, enhancing the realism to new limits. Combing both the strategy and arcade elements of the North Atlantic World War II conflict, Wolfpack also contains a number of innovations which have never been considered possible — until now.

11) TANK

Spectrum Holobyte

Release: January

Formats: Initially IBM PC, followed later by Amiga and Atari ST.

There have been many tank sims based on the M1 Abrams battle tank. Tank, from the makers of Falcon, looks like the most exciting yet — graphically and strategically. For ease of use Tank features two modes of play; the normal strategy-based game and an easy-to-use arcade challenge. As with previous Spectrum Holobyte games, Tank also contains an involving two-player head-to-head option.

12) STAR-LORD

MicroProse

Release: early 1990

Formats: IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum, Amstrad.

StarLord is based on the popular play-by-mail game designed and operated by Mike Singleton in the early Eighties. Up to ten players must battle between themselves to take total control of the Throne Star and gain the acclaim of the rest of the galaxy. Players battle between themselves, although the bias is definitely on strategy.

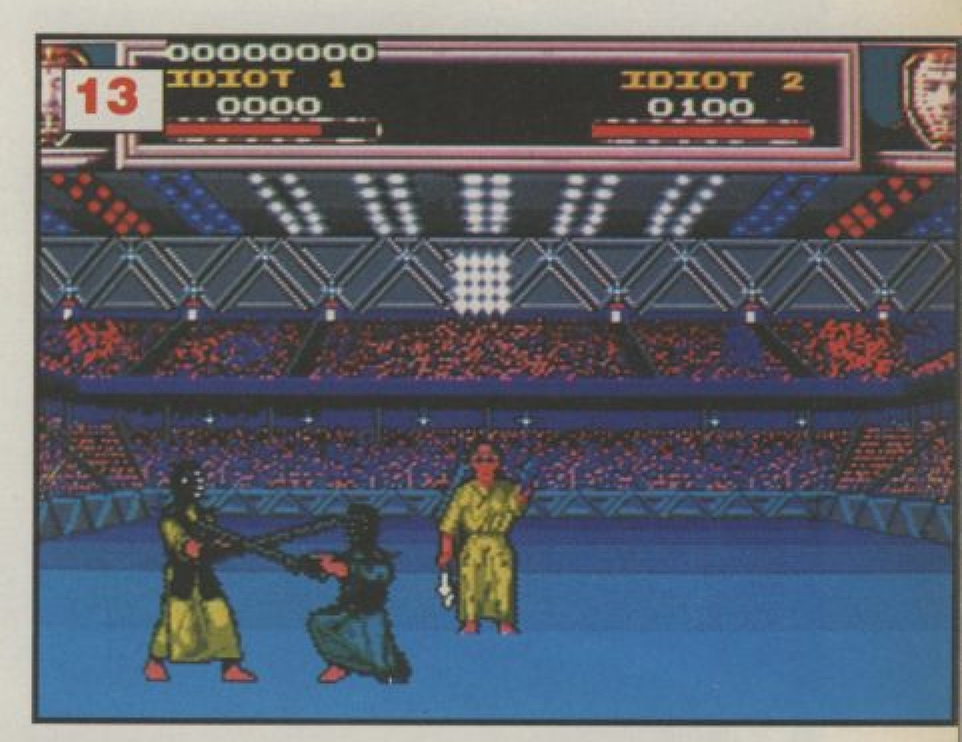
13) ORIENTAL GAMES

Firebird

Release: January

Formats: IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, C64, Spectrum, Amstrad.

Oriental Games was originally planned for release in the summer, but has subsequently been delayed till early 1990. Programmed by Source (who recently did New Zealand Story), Oriental Games is a simply another in the continuing line of beat-'em-ups. Take part in four tournaments, with four fighting styles (Kung Fu, Hollywood Rules, Sumo and Kendo), to reach the heights of a Grand Master.



Archimedes school

Fun School 2 has now sold over 60,000 units, which probably makes it the all-time top selling educational software package. It's currently available on every format imaginable and is soon to be released on the Archimedes (£19.95). Said Chris Payne (pictured with other classmates) of Database: 'We knew it was good, but just how good has taken our corporate breath away. Now they are even going mad for it in France and Germany, as well as the UK, as we've just launched the French and German language versions.'



The Super Graphx is here

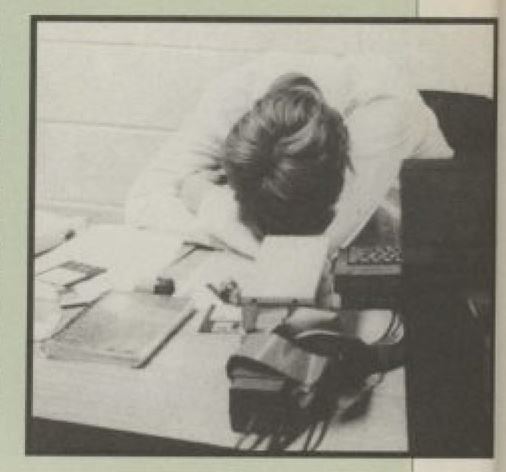
After TGM exclusively revealed all the details on NEC's follow-up to the PC Engine in the December issue, the first UK importers of the original PC Engine, Micromedia, announced that they would also be picking up the Super Graphx and distributing it in the UK. They expect first shipments into the UK in late December, and hope to have it available to the public in limited quantities by late January. Although the Super Graphx is not the next generation in consoles (we'll have to wait for the Nintendo Super Famicon in late 1990 for that), it is without a doubt the most advanced console available in the world today. Commented a Micromedia spokesman on the new product: 'The Super Graphx is not yet as versatile as the PC Engine in terms of peripheral support but is graphically superior and can run normal ROM-cards. NEC are only manufacturing a limited amount of the machines but Micromedia will give the same support to them as we will to the PC Engine.'

Micromedia also have details of a PC Engine helpline which they are sponsoring. The information line deals direct with users of the Engine and is

manned from 9:00am to 9:00pm everyday. Users can find out tips and cheats on all the latest games, and also general news of other activity in the PC Engine world. The number is charged at normal rates and is (0653) 600381.

SAM to beat Konix

was neck and neck all the way but it seems that the SAM Coupe will beat the Konix Multi System onto the shelves. As of the second week in December, MGT are announcing that the Coupe will be out 'shortly before Christmas'. (A bit late, as most people will have already purchased their main present by now.) But at least it should appear before the Konix, which looks like it'll now be coming out at Easter. The Z80-based SAM Coupe will retail for £169.95 and comes complete with an art and graphics package. Called Flash!, it was written by Bo Jangeborg whose previous accomplishments include the Artist graphics package and Fairlight for the Spectrum. Pictured is Bo, recovering from Mel (SAM manuals) Croucher's own version of Flash!



Chessbox champs

The Prestel user service, ChessBox, recently received a much needed boost when Jonathan Speelman (pictured), one of England's top three chess players, played five opponents simultaneously using the system. The players were situated in homes all over the country and linked to Prestel's Apsley headquarters through comms terminals. The players — picked from Prestel's own club, and including a group of primary school children and a handicapped person — each kept the grandmaster on his toes, with the result after four hours being four wins to Speelman and a tie.

'Playing chess by computer was an unusual experience for me, and not being able to see my opponents certainly added to the fun. When I discovered that one of my opponents suffered from cerebral palsy it really brought home to me how ChessBox can help to improve the quality of life for the disabled,' commented the victorious Speelman of the innovative system.



Concerning your news piece on Battle Command in the December issue, we'd like to put a few points right.

You've said that the game 'slipped through MicroProse's fingers.' Not so. Realtime continue to have a strong business association with MicroProse and continue to have respect for both the company and its personnel.

With Battle Command, however, it was decided between the two companies that for reasons of mutual self interest the game would be better placed with a different publisher — which turned out to be Ocean who, along with MicroProse, have a great tradition for turning out top quality games. Further, Gary Bracey of Ocean confirms that his announcement of Ocean's acquisition of Battle Command was in no way conceived to cause offence to MicroProse.

Also, we would like to point out that Battle Command, while retaining our superfast 3-D polygon graphics, is not a direct sequel to Carrier Command; ie, it does not continue the game scenario. In Battle Command's all-new setting, you pit your lone terrestrial Battle Unit against the overwhelming forces of a whole continent. And then proceed to decimate it.

We hope this sets the record precisely straight.

Ta very much.

Realtime Games Limited.



The distinguished adventurers, Magnetic Scrolls, have finally found a home with a major software house. This will hopefully mean more adventure games for 1990. Virgin Mastertronic recently signed up the industry veterans to release all their product for the next year. Pictured are Anita Sinclair (left), co-founder of Magnetic Scrolls, and Nick Alexander of Virgin Mastertronic.

Also linking up with a top software house this month are innovative developers Incentive, who have recently signed a distribution deal with Domark. The next product to come from the designers of Total Eclipse and Driller is entitled Castle Master. Set in 16th century England, it revolves around a haunted, 64-room castle — complete with spiders, bats and rats. Pictured are (l-r) Mark Strachan (Domark), Andy Tait and Ian Andrew (both Incentive), and Dominic Wheatley (Domark).



16-bit sales war

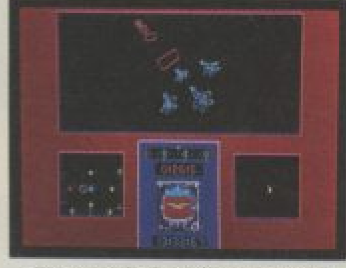
As Commodore proudly announced their 200,000th UK sale of the Amiga (pictured are the lucky Woking purchasers), Atari countered with allegations that the figures weren't all they appeared to be. Apparently the sales were to distributors and not direct to customers. Although, there's not much doubt that Commodore will easily reach their targets for this Christmas. A recent Christmas survey by TGM reporters revealed that the Amiga and Spectrum ads had been seen more times than the Atari or console ads — although, Sega and Nintendo had also been battling it out in sections of the teen press like Smash Hits and Viz.



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Blue Angels Formation Flight Simulation. Everything you've ever experienced in flight simulation is about to take a 360-degree diamond roll.

Blue Angels
FORMATION FLIGHT SIMULATION
ACCOLADE

Actual game screens from IBM PC EGA version of the game. Other versions may vary.

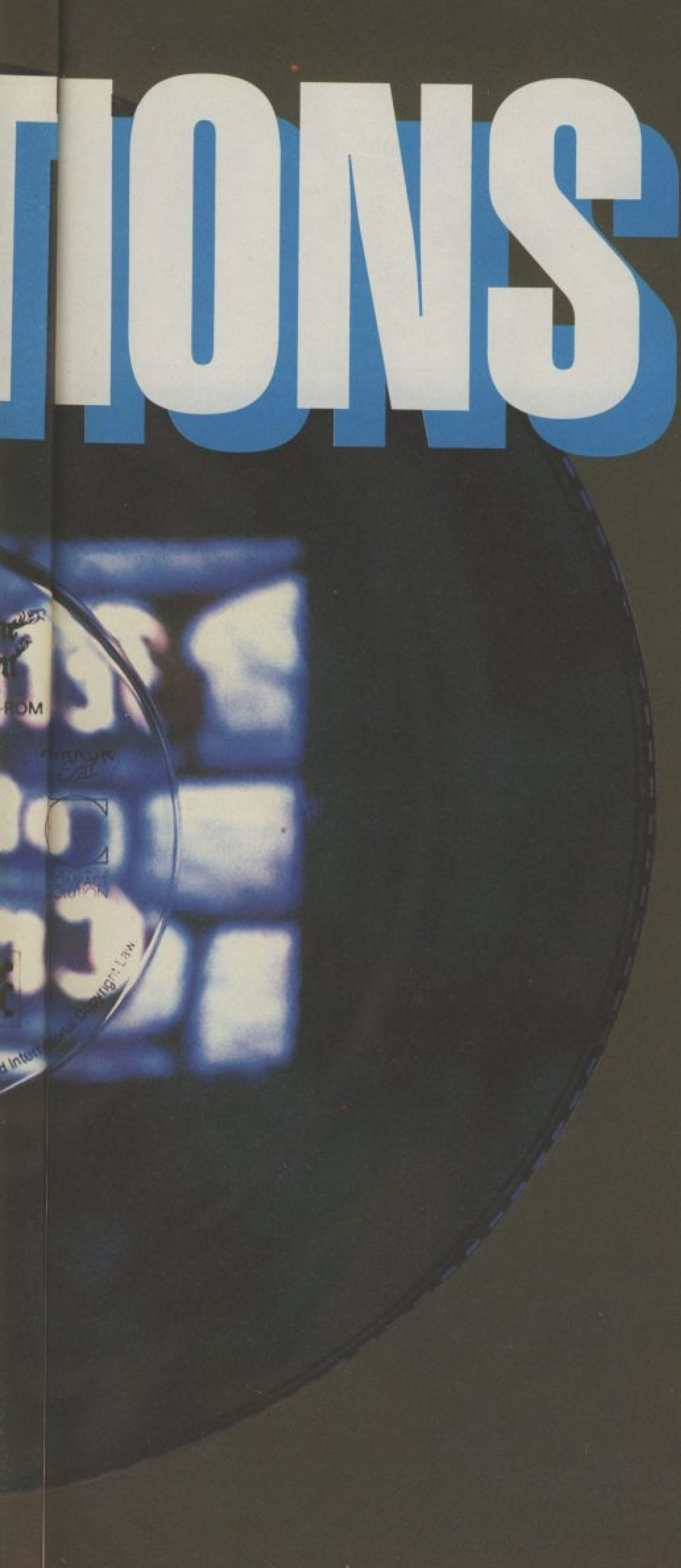
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REVOLUT

The race to the future has already started. In the last few months CD games software has become reality - and not just on high-end 16-bit machines, but on 8-bit computers like the Spectrum, C64 and MSX. It's all leading to the great CD interactive and multimedia event that is going to take the World by storm in the next few years. Stop off here for a glimpse into the future. There's Philips' CD-I unit and a whole host of new machines and game consoles boasting in-built CD ROM drives about to be unleashed. Ura Palomine is your guide to the future.





Imagine a time when computer games will look and sound like big-screen films. Picture Elm Street's fiendish Freddy filmed and framed for your indulgence; for you to do with him as you wish. Instead of watching the film, you'll become involved – you'll be part of the story. But most importantly, you'll determine how the plot thickens (or the blood drips). In effect, you'll be actor, producer, and director.

Forget computer generated drawings, 16-colour palettes and 8-bit sampled sounds; welcome to the real World – true colour, perfect 25-frames-a-second animation, and sensational CD quality stereo sound.

This might all sound like something from the deranged mind of a halucinating hippy, but reality is often stranger than a blown hippy's brain. The technology is available now, and is just beginning to appear for the home micro.

Compact disc video (CDV), compact disc interactive (CDI) and all other compact disc goings-on come under the heading multimedia. In short, a multimedia event is the combination of animated images, sound and text. You could argue that all computer/video games are multimedia events – and you'd be right to an extent. Multimedia can never – and will never – be fully exploited on a cassette or floppy disk based system. There's only so much data you can fit on a cassette or floppy, and slow loading times mean you're restricted to whatever can be squeezed into memory in one go. On a ZX81 that's not a whole heap!

Because the compact disc can store such a huge amount of data – something in the region of 550Mbytes of information – there is nothing commonly available that is better for staging a multimedia event. Storing true colour (24-bit) images and 44.1kHz 16-bit sampled sounds takes a lot of storage space – presently CD is the only commercially viable medium.

But before getting carried away with what the future has to offer, here's what's happening now.

SIDE STEP

Code Masters have recently released a stunning 30-game compilation for the Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64 and Spectrum. Code Masters' CD doesn't require a CD ROM drive – any domestic CD player will do. The CD player is used like a high-speed, reliable cassette deck. The home CD player is linked to the computer via an interface. One end plugs into the two phono sockets at the back of the player while the other end sits in the joystick port. To get the micro to recognise the CD player, you must first load a short startup program from cassette which begins reading analogue signals (and converting them to the digital equivalents) from the joystick port.

The thirty games on the disk are accessed in the same way that you'd play a track on a music CD. If you decide to listen to Code Masters' CD you'll hear a cacophony of high pitched squeeks.

OVER THE RAINBOW

Using the CD player as an input device means that, typically, loading time is comparable to a disk drive.

Because of the storage method used on the CD, the games are no different from other 8-bit games. The only advantage of the Code Masters' CD is loading speeds.

Rainbow Arts released their own compilation pack on CD. Rainbow Arts are based in Germany and since the CPC and Spectrum micros are unpopular over there, the CD was only released on the C64. Said a spokesman for Rainbow: "We have to make CD commercially viable. We'll wait and see the results of the C64 experiment before we make any plans for the future; we may well support the ST and Amiga with CD ROM games.

There is no benefit in using the analogue CD method with the ST and Amiga since this is no faster than the floppy drive. Many observers see Rainbow Arts and Code Masters' foray into CD technology as a step to the side rather than a leap forward. Ironically, Code Masters will probably be the first company to make a profit from releasing entertainment software on CD.

Code Masters have big ambitions for 8-bit machines. 'We're looking at doing something really big with CD games,' enthused Richard Darling. It's hard to see how that will be possible using a standard CD player.



■ The Darling brothers, Richard (left) and David, are responsible for the first CD games to appear for the Spectrum and Amstrad CPC. Amstrad CPC and Spectrum.

To make full use of the CD, you need to be able to send the laser head to any part of the disc at will, pick up the data you need at a fast rate and then use it. Only in this way can games start to incorporate fancy graphics and CD-quality sound. There's no hope of this happening when you're expected to press all the buttons on the CD player.

The 16-bit arena has never been slow to grasp new media and technology, so why is that a UK budget software house has made the first move into affordable CD-based software? The reason is that Code Masters have taken a step away from what CD technology is all about. They're using the CD as an audio medium rather than exploiting its full potential as a fast mass data storage medium.

THE REAL THING

True CD-ROM units plug directly into the controlling computer. This means that the computer can force the CD read head to move anywhere on the disc's surface.

The advantage of this is obvious; extra graphics, levels and sound can be loaded when required. In theory this sounds fantastic, unfortunately — in reality — data transfer rates from CD ROM to computer memory are around 150K/s (and that's assuming the read head is in the right spot to start reading). While that may seem like a lot, it's not. On an 8-bit machine – where main memory is unlikely to be larger than 64K and where screen size will be 16K at most – these sort of speeds aren't a problem.

However, on a 16-bit machine where 512K is the norm, it would take four seconds to fill memory. This is simply unacceptable when graphics and sound consume enormous amounts of RAM. For instance, it would take a quarter of a second to load a

THE CD SIDE OF THE ST

The ST has had a love-affair with CD for years. It was around two years ago when the ST had its first encounter with laser technology. Microdeal released the Dragon's Lair laser disc game. If you had an appropriate laser disk player you could run Don Bluth's classic cartoon adventure. The interface, software and laser disc sold for £120. Unfortunately, the game wasn't well implemented on the ST, being slow and unreliable.

Although Dragon's Lair was a big miss, it did bring the ST and CD technology together. Around the same time Atari's CD ROM player was previewed. It still isn't on sale.

The player takes ordinary-sized CD discs, but, as yet, there has been no software support in this country. In Germany, where the player has been on sale for for a couple of years, there is a small software base – but that consists of serious titles like Grolier's Encyclopaedia and so on.

The hardware connects the ST's DMA port and can be treated like a super fast, read-only hard disk. With over 500Mb of storage space, there's no reason why sampled sounds and super-fast graphics shouldn't make it onto the ST. Mirrorsoft were one of the first companies to acquire one; they would love to produce something for it, but with no machines sold in this country...



■ ReadySoft's conversion of Don Bluth's classic coin-op, Dragon's Lair.

complete ST screen from CD ROM. There's no way you could do full-screen animation at those sort of speeds – you need to be able to display 25 frames a second for fluid animation.

With the advance of technology and the demand for greater realism by games players, nothing short of TV-quality images and CD-like sound will suffice. Graphics and sound of that quality take up huge amounts of memory. A CD ROM player simply can't hope to cope with the sort of speeds necessary to load that amount of data in such a short time.

By making sensible use of CD ROM, it is possible to create epic adventures and phenomenal multi-level games. Many already exist for the PC, Apple Mac and PC Engine. Many CD ROM games have music tracks which play through the CD ROM unit's audio output while the game is running. Having CD-quality sound playing in the background while you're blasting the umpteenth wave of aliens adds enormous depth to the game.

CD ROMs can't give you graphics beyond your machine's capabilities. CDI (compact disc interactive) can. CDI is a special form of CD being developed jointly by Sony and Philips. The CDI player includes a special controller which allows sound and vision to be decoded and read from disc. This was the theory behind the BBC's Doomsday project, where living in the 1980's was portrayed through video sequences in an interactive environment.

IT MOVES TOO

Pergamon – a sister company to Mirrorsoft – are working on a Guiness disc of records for the Mac which features clever animation sequences and sampled sounds where necessary. Consequently, you can hear the fastest talking man in the world and see the first piece of film ever recorded. The disc includes very high quality 24-bit colour as well as CD-quality sound. The disc itself isn't expensive – coming in at around £60 – but the hardware to run it runs into several thousand pounds.

CDI not only promises reasonably cheap software, but also hardware that is in the grasp of most. The entry price for Philips and Sony's CDI player, reckoned to be ready later this year or early next year, is expected to be £800. Ordinary audio CD players were this price – and more – when they first came out. On that basis CDI units will be around the price of ordinary CD players towards the end of the decade. CDI is going to appeal to the whole family: it won't just be interactive games that can be run, but interactive music videos, films, encyclopaedias, dictionaries...

ACTIVISION GO COSMIC

That's already true in the Apple Macintosh scene. Activision's US base is researching the possibilities of CD storage devices and has responded to the CD gauntlet by releasing Manhole and Cosmic Osmo. Although these don't exploit the full potential of sound and visuals available, they are the closest thing to interactive multimedia events.



Both Manhole and Cosmic Osmo are enormous adventure games on a scale that has never before been possible. In Cosmic Osmo, not only can you look at every detail of the screen but you can explore virtually the complete universe and never come across the boundaries of the game. This is the ultimate adventure, placing you in a space station and leaving you to make up the rules and search where you want. There's no real objective to it – just wander and meet crazy characters and discover oddball ornaments.

Manhole is slightly different because more attention is paid to atmospheric graphics. Here, you tour through the adventure as if you're looking through your own eyes. For example, if you enter a room and see a set of stairs in the distance, you can wander over to them and walk up them. As you do all of this, you see the areas of the room from all sorts of different angles. The game is enormous, letting you explore towers and castles, exactly as if you were there on the spot.

Good adventures try and involve you in the game's surroundings by letting you examine as much of a room as possible. With the potential CDI has to offer, you'll soon be able to explore every nook and cranny in a room and hear the noises made when you open things and rattle others. Interactive multimedia will be the ultimate experience.

CD is big news for simulations software, and Microprose have indicated that they are going to be looking seriously at CD ROM in the year to come. Microprose has acquired a reputation for producing good simulations, so CD is an obvious area for it to branch into. With 550Mb of data at hand, there's no reason why flight simulators can't suddenly let you fly anywhere in the World. And instead of the unrealistic 3D-filled polygons which ordinarily make up the view from the window, you could see realistic views, perhaps even digitised from a real plane.

TURNING JAPANESE

There's one area where CD ROMs are being used totally for the purpose of enhancing gameplay, and that's in the console market. There's already a CD ROM device for the PC Engine and Sega have recently confirmed that there will be a CD ROM device for the Mega Drive.

Surprisingly, the Japanese giants behind the console scene don't see the PC Engine as a particularly impressive beast. They feel that much of its technology is outdated by their standards and they will not throw more money at it. This leaves you wondering what they have that could be so much better than the PC Engine. The Sharp 68000 is the answer. The Japanese are now building machines which come with CD ROM built in as standard.

The Sharp has a fast 16-bit processor which makes it one of the most powerful machines on the market. It comes at a price: £2000!

Then there's the FM Towns, currently the big sensation in Japan. The machine comes from Fujitsu and again features CD ROM as standard. Eight channels of stereo sound and high resolution graphics with over one million colours on screen at once ensure that you've got everything to take you into the multimedia decade. To keep up with all this, the FM Towns comes with a 32-bit 80386 processor.

The CD is going to be the medium of the 90's and over the next decade we'll see some of the biggest advances in games since the introduction of the first Pong video game. through CD. Software houses are already showing an eagerness to bring games onto this silver medium. When it happens, games will be treated like films, shot from artistic angles and featuring expensive stunts. With 16-bit software, musicians and graphic artists, often without programming knowledge, are brought into a game project. Many more people may be involved in future titles and the results are bound to epic. This is just the beginning.

■ Sega's 16-bit console hasn't got a CD ROM drive yet, but the rumours are that it will be getting one soon.

HOW THEY'RE MADE

The surface of a CD or optical disc is composed of reflective and non-reflective pits which translate to the two binary states – 1 and 0. The large space is made available because the laser beam which reads the disc is focused onto the pits is tiny. Placing all the information on a CD is done at a pressing plant and can be extremely expensive. Once the data is on the CD, it can never be removed (unless you get out a sheet of sand paper).

The reflective surface of a CD is protected by a plastic shell, often as much as two millimetres thick. Damage to the plastic shell will not affect the playing of the CD. This is why you can run your sweaty fingertips all over it and still listen to perfect sound. Combine this with the fact that the read head never touches the disc and you have a very durable medium.

It's the enormous space available which makes CD's so attractive. However even 550 Mbytes can be limiting for particularly long sequences of high-quality animation and audio. As a result, larger, 12-inch CDs (or laser discs) are available. These can store a staggering four gigabytes.



■ For around £300 you can kit yourself out with a PC Engine CD ROM drive. Micro Media on 0743 271792 can supply you with a selection of CD games.

CD FUN IN SOHO

There are already a wealth of games for various computers available on CD. Not all store data in the same manner, and not all can be given the multi-media tag.

THE CD GAMES PACK

Amstrad CPC/C64/Spectrum, £19.95, Code Masters (0926 814132)

Neeargh! Just when you thought every remaining household appliance was safe, Code Masters come along with a game compilation on CD that requires the use of a domestic CD player.

Along with over 30 games on CD, you get a small interface for plugging into your computer's cassette port and a phono lead for linking the interface to your CD player.

All the games on the CD are re-releases of previous Code Masters budget games. The number of games is too long to list here, and varies depending on the computer format. Suffice to say, each game works out at around 67p.

1ST CD EDITION

Commodore 64, £39.99, Rainbow Arts (0203 537014)

For your money you get the following 10 titles on CD: David's Midnight Magic, Leaderboard Golf, Mission Elevator, Impossible Mission, Dropzone, Loderunner, Solomon's Key, Jinks, Fist II and MULE. In addition to that lot, you get 10 musical tracks which may be played conventionally through your CD player.

Like Code Masters' Spectrum CD compilation, the 1st CD Edition is not a CD ROM. Data is stored as a series of binary ones and zeros and sounds like a computer data cassette when played through the hi-fi. The CD is being used as nothing more than a safe medium for storing lots of information. Because of the way data is stored there isn't as much room to store information as there is on a conventional CD ROM.

A small interface, which plugs into the computer's cassette port, accepts a phono lead from the line or headphone output of a CD player.

Loads of fun in the C64 version of Loderunner on

THE GAMES COLLECTION

Rainbow Arts' compilation CD, .MSX, £27.95, EuroSoft/ Night Dare (0803 606146)

An astounding 33 games have been squeezed onto the CD. And many are great classics like Missile Command, Frogger, Quebert and Penguin.

No special interfaces or cables are needed to connect a domestic CD player to the MSX machine; the MSX comes with the appropriate leads and connectors as standard.

The Games Collection CD works in an identical manner to Rainbow Arts and Code Masters' offerings. While a lot of noise has been made about Rainbow Arts and Code Masters' method of storing programs on CD, EuroSoft came up with the concept long before anyone else.

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

PC, £49.99, Mirrorsoft (01-928 1454)

At last, a true CD ROM game. A CD ROM drive is required to run the software – a standard domestic player simply won't work. The data fed into the computer is digital rather than analogue.

If your CD ROM drive can play audio CDs, be prepared for a surprise. All the sound effects, music and voice-overs in Defendor of the Crown will play in glorious CD-quality stereo.

Mirrorsoft are planning other PC and Apple Mac CD ROMs, so stay tuned.

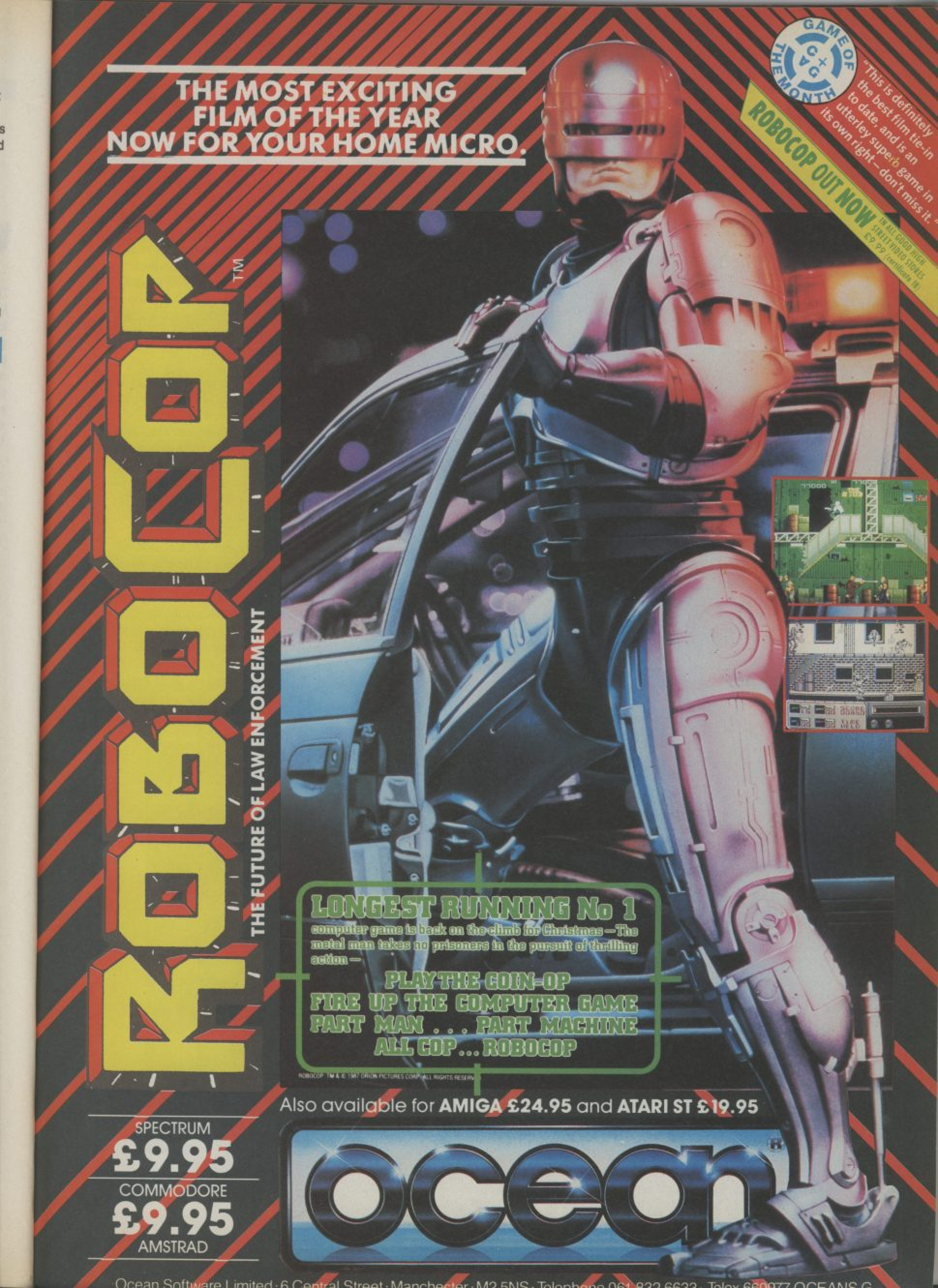
PC ENGINE CD ROMS

PC Engine, £39.99, Micro Media (0743 271792)

Like Mirrorsoft's Defendor of the Crown, Wonder Boy III is a true CD ROM game. In fact, all Engine games are true CD ROM games. A CD drive unit, which doubles as a portable CD audio player, can be purchased for the PC Engine.

There are around 50 Engine CD ROM games. Many are virtually identical to the coin-op versions of the games. Ones to look out for include R-Type I, R-Type II, Varis II, Far East of Eden, Street Fighter, Noriko I, Noriko II, Ultra Space Story, Animal Kingdom and Cobura.

Most CD ROM games for the Engine come with musical tracks stored on the disc; these usually play while the game is running leaving the Engine free to generate sound effects. ■


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READ ALL ABOUT IT AND PLAY IT TOO!

CD technology is no longer a thing of the future. Unreliability is a thing of the past. And CD loading is now available to all computer owners. But only one company has tried to implement this new and exciting development in disk access on all the popular computer formats, and they are the same people who revolutionised the budget games market. Who else but Code Masters. Their recently-released CD Games Pack (£19.99) includes 30 fab Code Masters games on CD, a CD initializing cassette and the magic wire to connect your CD player to your computer.

Usually you'd have to supply your own CD player and although they're becoming cheaper, they're not exactly growing on trees. That's why we've managed to squeeze a terrific portable Sony Discman D-20 out of Code Masters as well as a CD Games Pack for the first prize winner. Also, ten runners-up will each receive a Code Masters T-shirt.

To win one of these prizes, just tell us which European company developed the principles of compact disc technology. Pop your answer on a postcard, along with your name, address and computer (8- or 16-bit!) and send it to: Coders CD Comp, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. **Winners will be drawn on February 8, so hurry up...**



NO MERCY-NO SURRENDER

A NEW 3D DUO FROM LOGOTRON ENTERTAINMENT

BAD COMPANY...

You've fallen into Bad Company. In this place there are no good guys, just you, your sidekick and wave upon wave of insectoid enemies who have just one thing in mind - the total destruction of every human they set their nasty little bug eyes on. No quarter is asked and none is given, you know what to do - if it's alien, blast it!

Bad Company is programming legend Steve Bak's latest and greatest masterwork with scrolling of vanishing point perspective surfaces, the latest superfast 3D sprite techniques and featuring:

- Simultaneous two-player option
- Unique choice of weaponry, with fire power boosters
- Choice of eight different combat heroes
- Uncountable waves of sickening insectoid attack

ATARI ST & COMMODORE AMIGA
END NOVEMBER '89. PRICE £24.99



ATARI ST SCREEN SHOT

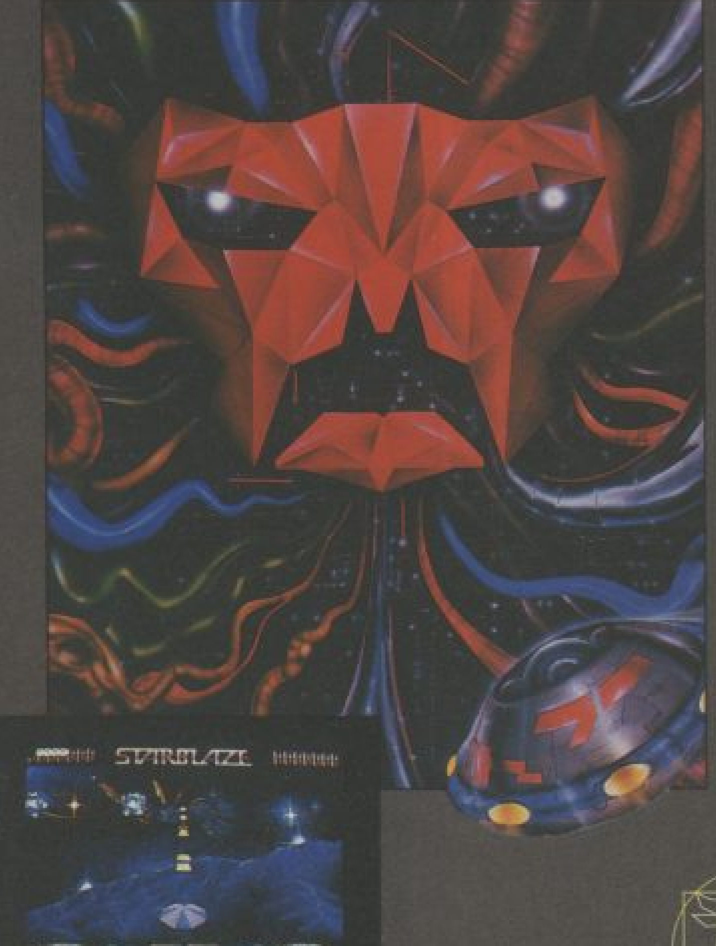
STAR-BLAZE...

StarBlaze is pure solid vector 3D Shoot 'em Up from the programmers that brought you 16 bit Elite! To qualify as a Tamsinian warrior in an intergalactic war of unparalled ferocity, you must prove your prowess by taking on scores of fiendish alien attack waves and live to tell the tale. How will you do it? With quick reactions and the fastest trigger finger on the planet !

StarBlaze is a game which draws upon the strongest features of the classic arcade titles to introduce a wholly original style of game to the arcade genre, featuring:

- Over a hundred different attack patterns
- Action-packed gameplay in stunning solid 3D
- Five colourful backdrops (forget boring starfields)
- Shield, smart bomb and extra power pickups

ATARI ST & COMMODORE AMIGA
END OCTOBER '89. PRICE £19.99



ATARI ST SCREEN SHOT



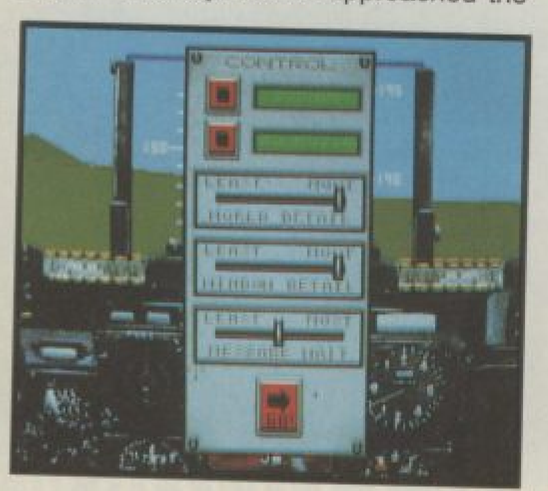
A-10 TANK

Sitting in the A-10 cockpit I could see two more Warthogs in front of me. Mission for the day? Take out a MiG base and then head for the honey pot – a supply base ringed by lethal SAM sites. Having received the signal, we all slammed the throttle forward, 4000lb of thrust kicking us into the sky. Leveling off we headed for the river valley which gave us valuable cover, "Prepare to take the left fork – we'll strike the MiG air base first."



That was the flight leader. Travelling in loose formation we banked left taking the eastern tributary. As we approached the high ground the radio crackled into life again, "Break left, we'll head for that ridge line and then come in by the back door."

Knocking the stick to the left I banked hard; G-Suit contracting the lower half of my body as the blood headed for my feet. We were circling the ridge now. Selector to Maverick. Throttle to 300 knots. Altitude down to 350ft. Check your six, "When we pass the ridge make a hard right, the MiG base will be right there. I'll take out the SAM threat."



I could see the MiG base now. We all had a job to do. Mine was to take out the MiGs. Suddenly the sky was alive with anti-aircraft fire and SAMs. Three lonely A-10s dived into a living hell... (that was a nice story, now get on with it! – Ed)

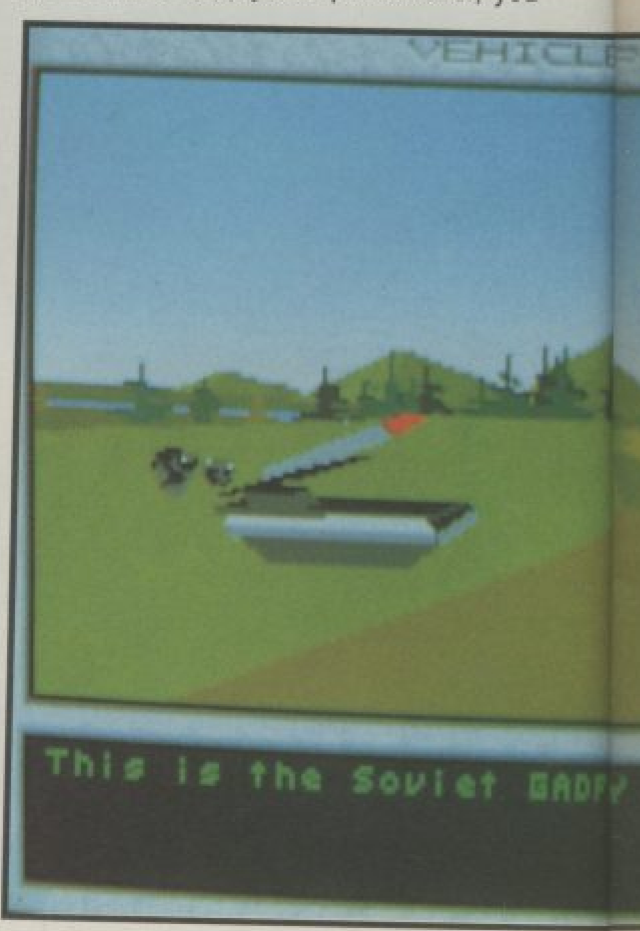
A-10 Tank Killer is a flight simulation of the USAF's A-10 Thunderbolt – or Warthog as it is affectionately known.

While the game is aerodynamically accurate, it should appeal to players who would normally avoid flight simulators altogether. Tank Killer will not snow you under with technical specifications. Die-hard flight-sim fanatics will criticise it for its lack of certain details. For example, the game's A-10 is a two seat version. In fact, the only active service version of the A-10 is the single seat version. In addition, you don't have to land if you don't want to and the time has been compressed in certain areas.



However, Dynamix are fully aware of these facts. They intend Tank Killer to be more of an entertainment package. That is not to say that flight-sim aficionados won't enjoy the game.

The game itself consists of six different missions (including the one detailed above). They tend to be varied, multi-part affairs. For example, one mission asks you to hit a supply dump. However, you



KILLER

GAME	A 10 TANK ATTACK
PRODUCER	DYNAMIX
VERSIONS	
PC	TBA

PC

96

The graphics are Tank Killer's star quality. Dynamix have used digitised photos of real actors, taken on location, kitted out with real flight gear to give you maximum atmosphere. You want a realistic cockpit display? Tank Killer has a digitised cockpit from a genuine A-10! In fact, there are other digitised screens of the aircraft itself (the weapon loading screen, for example). All of the other graphics are solid 3D affairs which are detailed and smooth. Other impressive screens are the status screen which shows any damage taken along with an animated weapons inventory and multiple views inside and outside of the aircraft. Sound is catered for via Roland and Ad Lib sound boards which provide a variety of backing tracks depending on the situation. Sound effects are output via the PC's speaker. It's a corker!



must also provide close air support for a platoon of tanks which will take out the SAM sites for you and keep a nearby bridge open for allied support.

The main area of the game is the campaign. Here, you cycle through each mission but every action you make will affect events later on. The more failures you have initially the more difficult things will be later on – both for yourself and the rest of the armed forces. Dynamix have promised further scenario disks to load into the original game.

With Tank Killer you really feel you are part of a team. The inter-pilot chatter stated above really happened in a mission I played – more, in fact. When you play Spectrum-Holobyte's Falcon, for example, you get the feeling it is you against the world. However, in Tank Killer it is more of 'you hit the MiGs, I'll hit the SAMs and Buddy there will blast the anti-aircraft guns. Let's go for it. Yee-hah!'.

You feel more involved, the action appears more realistic and you end up with a real knot in your stomach when you hear 'I'm hit! I'm hit!' and you watch your wingman turn into a ball of fire. A-10 Tank Killer is thoroughly recommended – it is pure entertainment.

PAUL RIGBY

A-10 THUNDEBOLT II

It may not be the most glamorous of aircraft currently in service with the United States Air Force but the Fairchild A-10 Thunderbolt II's looks are totally functional. Born out of the need for maximum ground-attack firepower and plane-survivability which was so desperately needed in Vietnam, the A-10 is one of the most cost and tactically effective ground-attack/tank-killer NATO aircraft around.

And it's not just because of its superlative maintenance record or relatively cheap cost either (compared with F-15s). The primary reason is the survivability of the aircraft, the pilot sits in a 'bath' of titanium armour with bullet-proof glass all around and every part of the plane is well protected from bullet hits, shells, debris and shrapnel. The engines are spaced apart to avoid damage to both from one shell and all the control systems have a backup to ensure survival. After all, if this plane is to survive any war in Central Europe it's got to be tough (unlike the fancy Mach 2 jets in service today which can be knocked out by a single bullet). What makes this plane really special, though, and makes the A-10 pilot job one of the most sought after in the USAF, is its impressive weapon inventory — primarily its GAU-8 Avenger main gun. It's longer than a Volkswagen Beetle, it fires 70 rounds of 30mm milk-bottle sized cannon shells a second and no enemy vehicle, even the latest Russian T-80/T-84 main battle tanks, can survive its awesome firepower. When the Warthog roars, the effect is devastating.

BLUE LIGHTNING

Yo, Sam! Come on man, gimme a go. Sheesh, look, I beat your 10,000 high score fair and square. Now come on, gimme the Lynx back. I gotta review the game. Come on man... Now you know the performance I have to put up with whenever I want to review a Lynx game. That Sam Tramiel character just doesn't know when he's beaten.
Awlright, ma man! Yo, now, let's get on with the review. Blue Lightning places you in a fighter plane. The action is viewed from just behind the tail of the plane a la Afterburner. In fact, the game is very reminiscent of Afterburner. However, unlike most of the computer conversions, this baby plays like a dream. There are a variety of missions to embark on – plus lots of enemy fighter planes, seeker missiles, ground defenses, and natural obstacles to avoid.

Before you set out on your mission, your plane is tanked up. The tiny animated figures that appear carrying a hose look really neat. A great touch. Liftoff is automatic. But once in the sky it's all action. Some missions require you to destroy land targets, like stationary tanks and weapon supplies, while others have you bombing ship convoys.

You can make the aircraft climb, bank to the left or right and dive. You can also unleash a torrent of deadly cannon fire or even deadlier missiles. While you're searching for prey, or they're doing it to you, the landscape races past. Flying low makes it tougher for the planes to get at you, but it also makes it easier for mountains to kiss your nose – hard. You can climb through clouds when there are no targets below and knock off a few enemy planes. Speaking of the enemy planes, they don't fire cannon shells – that's the good news. They fire a lot of missiles instead. You can hear the suckers before you see them; thank the radar warning tracker for that. It's a lot of fun swerving out of the way as one of those grey-headed death-dealers comes barreling towards you. Having enough altitude means you can dive for the ground and dodge the missiles. Your plane comes equipped with a HUD (head-up display) which displays vital information like your mission briefing and whether your weapon sights are targeted on the enemy. Having a musical background here would be dumb. The roar of your engines, the sound of exploding planes and missiles whooshing along are all the symphony needed – watching a missile's smoke trail as it leaves your wing and zeroes in on the target is almost like a hymn (what were you on when you wrote this? – Ed). Explosions are spectacular, with bits of blazing planes scattering across the sky when something is hit. Ground targets also pop apart nicely. Fractal graphics give you views of both ground and sky, and the landscape changes dramatically depending on your distance. It's great watching the landscape change from ant size to huge, as it gets larger and more defined with hills, valleys, trees and mountain ranges. When you see the plane's shadow on the ground it's time to head for the skies.

The game keeps running at breakneck speed no matter what is happening on screen. Colours are bright and colourful, and your plane is large enough to be the centre of attention without taking up too much space. Combining the best of flight simulation with attack techniques, Blue Lightning is hard to put down. It's a great battery drainer for sure!

Marshal Rosenthal





GAME	**BLUE LIGHTNING**
PRODUCER	**EPYX**
VERSIONS	
ATARI LYN X	£39.95

ATARI ST

87

Incredible, how did the programmers manage to squeeze so much gameplay into such a small area. The speed, graphics and sounds are tremendous. While there's not much to tackle your brain cells, the game is so addictive I'm already on by 57th set of batteries.







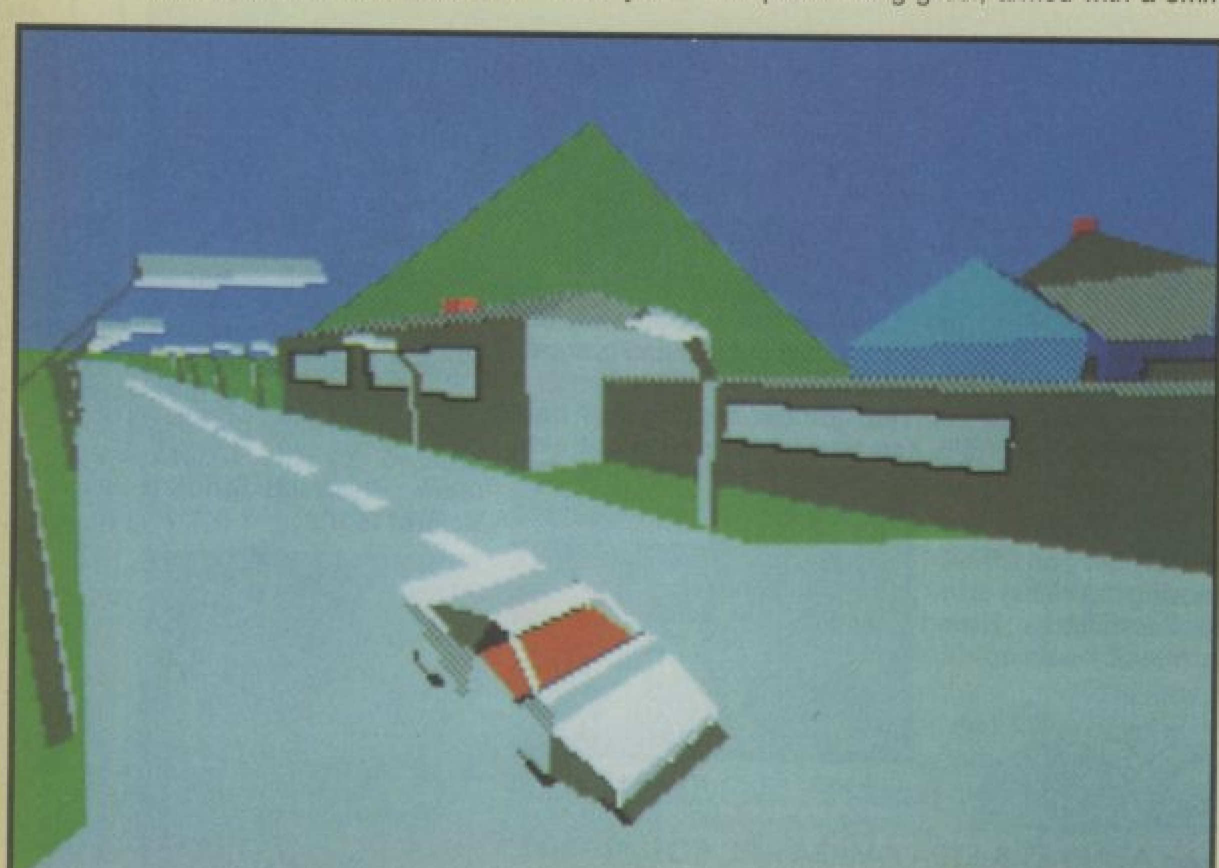
DAVID WOLF SECRET AGENT

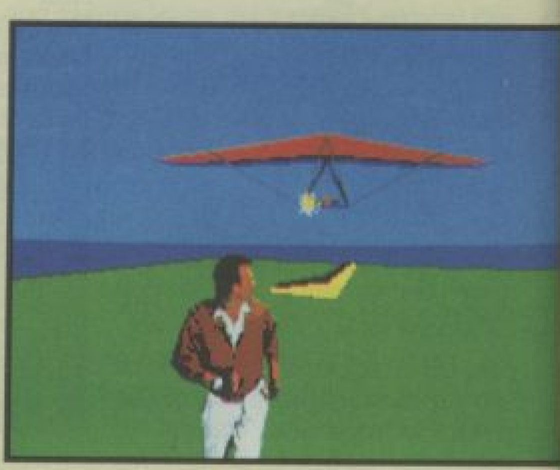
The Games Machine
STAR PLAYER

A real James Bond story this. A top secret Stealth fighter has been stolen by a bunch of bad guys belonging to Viper, a deadly organisation run by one Bruno Vasto. It seems that Viper wish to rule the world, but not before stomping all over Peregrine first. Peregrine are the, good guys. And you happen to be their top agent, David Wolf.

Not only has the aircraft gone missing but a brilliant aerospace engineer has been kidnapped too. She (yes, she – well, you have to save the girl don't you? It's traditional) is an expert on the Stealth Project. So, if the ransom isn't paid the Stealth fighter will be used by the Viper force to deliver a nuke onto Capital Hill. Golly!

The game actually plays like a Cinemaware product; you play a sub-game, watch a bit of animation and story, play a sub-game, and so on. In David Wolf – Secret Agent you have a variety of sub-games that are thoroughly enjoyable to play. The first is a solid 3D hang glider fight. You pilot a hang glider, armed with a 9mm gun, over the cliffs of Dover and are immediately set upon by four similar Viper gliders. Shoot them all down and you're away. However, you have to watch your height as the glider loses altitude quickly. The only way to gain height is to find thermal currents of air. In addition, you have to watch





your speed. Hang around (ho, ho – Ed) too long and you'll be blown out of the sky. Collisions are another hazard. Overall, a unique sequence.

The next sequence is the first of two car chases (again in solid 3D). Both involve evading the chasing cars and hitting the enemy ahead.

Then there's the skydiving sequence. You left the aircraft without a parachute. Talk about being forgetful. But wait, what about pinching the Viper agent's parachute. Yes, the agent who is skydiving several hundred feet below. Manoeuvre your char-

GAME ....
DAVID WOLF — SECRET AGENT
PRODUCER..................DYNAMIX
VERSIONS.......................................
PC..TBA

PC

The graphics are absolutely astounding. I only had the EGA version (the VGA version should be around as you read this) for review but even they are excellent. Dynamix have used 16 actors who have been used on real-life sets complete with make-up and costumes. Add this feature to the 400 digitised screens, cinematic cuts, fades and 'meanwhile screens, and you really believe that you are watching a movie – and an interactive one at that. Sound effects emanate from the luckless PC speaker, but the effective background music is provided by Roland and Ad Lib sound cards. The music changes with the situation and the mood of the story. The digitised pictures are complemented by the wonderful 3D graphics. In fact, Dynamix have done a good job mixing the two. For example, there is one short sequence, after a successful car chase, in which David Wolf turns to the camera and smiles. He and the car are digitised; everything behind is smoothly scrolling solid 3D hills and terrain. Wonderful.

FAST FACTS

The use of oil (an old Bond trick, this) is effective in the car chase scenes – especially on corners. A forward firing gun and missile will destroy an oncoming car in the first chase and a helicopter in the second.





acter towards the agent, biff the bounder and float gently down. I say, tally ho!

Finally, there is a flight sim sequence in the Stealth fighter. Avoid a SAM missile and shoot down two enemy fighters and you're home and dry.

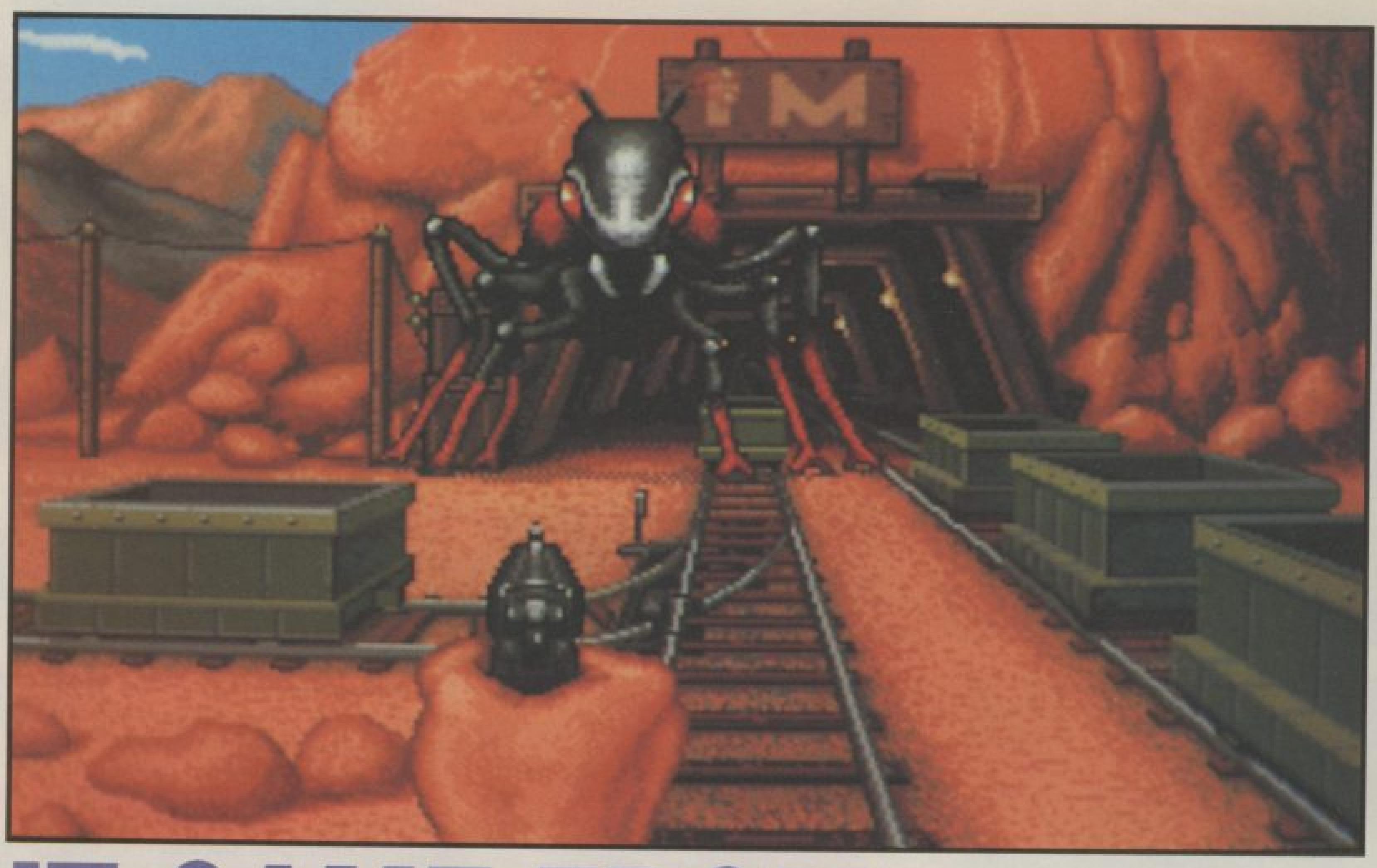
Dynamix have considered the player in David Wolf; ever played a Cinemaware game and been killed in a sub-game? You have to re-start the game and try again. Not in David Wolf. Dynamix have developed a unique VCR interface which can fast forward you to any part of the game. You can avoid the movie bits in-between the sub-games, or fast forward them to get a quick resume. An excellent system this as it stops the game becoming tedious.

David Wold is a completely absorbi game. The story is fast moving, David does a good impression of a witty, debonair James Bond and the story is not bad for an action adventure. However, it's the use of actors and digitised graphics which set it apart from every other game of its kind. It gives the game a very adult atmosphere. I even prefer it to the Cinemaware products which are always very cartoon-like in comparison. Buy David Wolf – Secret Agent, you won't be disappointed. **Paul Rigby**







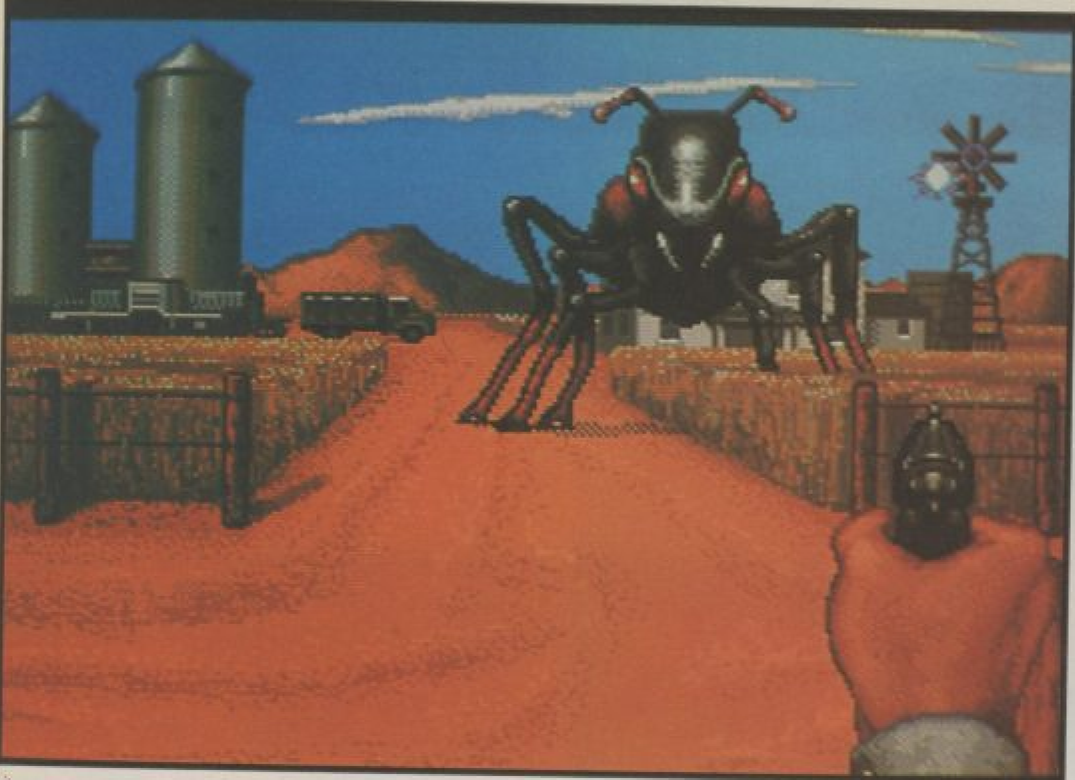


IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

A peaceful, silent stretch of desert on the outskirts of Lizard Breath, a secluded Californian town. In the lingering summer twilight, a gentle breeze disturbs the sand and nudges tumbleweed along the plain. Some birds flit away. A rabbit emerges from its warren. It's the only living creature in sight; it balances on its hind legs to sniff the cooling air. It senses something amiss.

Suddenly the silence is broken by a high-pitched whistle as a glowing object hurtles from the skies. Crashing into a distant mountain, the meteorite explodes on impact, briefly bathing the surrounding area in a golden light. Then silence, as if nothing had happened. But Lizard Breath will never be the same, as so clearly demonstrated in It Came From The Desert. You are Dr Greg Bradley, a geologist just returning home from a week's vacation. From information given by locals, it soon becomes clear that all is not well. Geez, an old prospector, tells of a cow with its head bitten clean off and the strange behaviour of his donkey since they visited a volcanic area where he collected a fragment of meteorite. Happily, you specialise in meteorite geology and this radioactive fragment launches your investigations. From rumours and, later, personal experience, you discover that the meteor's radiation has mutated harvester ants into 50-foot high giants. Unfortunately, you're the only person who sees them and lives to tell the tale. The sceptical Lizard Breath hicks don't believe you. You have two weeks, game-time (one second actual-time equals one minute game-time), to either find and destroy the queen ant's lair or present four pieces of evidence to the mayor, convincing him to mobilise the National Guard against the insect threat.
The most used part of the game is a large scrolling map of the area. Clicking on a building, names it and gives estimated time of arrival – time is of the essence if the town is to be saved. To save time, people can be called unfortunately they're usually less talkative on the phone. Conversations are made using text boxes and illustrated with ani-





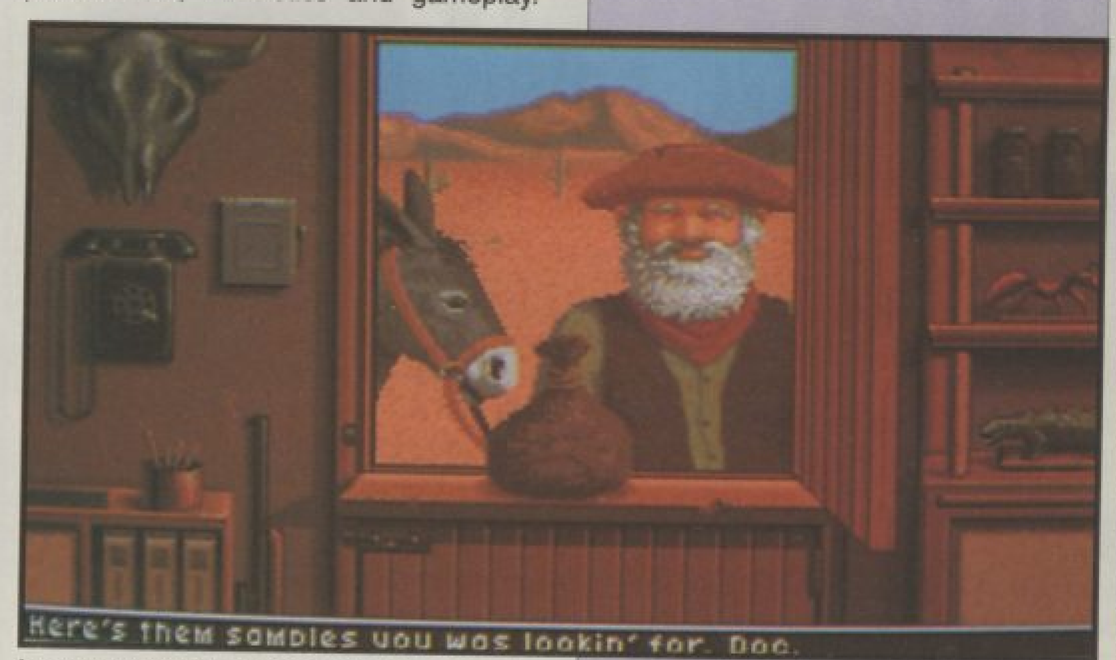
GAME	IT CAME FROM THE DESERT
PRODUCER	CINEMAWARE/ MIRRORSOFT
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£29.99
ATARI ST	£24.99
PC	£29.99

AMIGA

Unfortunately only for 1Mbyte machines. The title sequence is very attractive. The parallax scrolling, high-definition graphics, clear speech and authentic-sounding music in the game mean your ears and eyes are in for a treat. Backgrounds and characters are almost as good; facial animation is realistic. Although the famous ants look threatening, they move jerkily. Plan views are used many times which is a pity as, apart from the hospital, they get very repetitive. A desert isn't exactly interesting to look at!

mated figures. Ant encounters are displayed in first person perspective. Aiming at the giant insects' weak point kills them and it's then that a sample of their venom can be taken (one of the four pieces of evidence). The other three are a casting of tracks, a piece of an ant and a sound recording of their call. If you fail in fending off an ant you'll wake up in hospital. Although you'll fully recover, the bad news is that treatment takes a day, time you can precious afford. However, if you think your reactions are good enough, you can try to escape. A plan view of the hospital is given and you have to avoid nurses, doctors and security men by dodging in rooms and under furniture. Fail to reach the main doors before they reach you, and the deranged medics inject you with a tranquillizer and strap you to a bed! You're going nowhere till you're fully recovered! Considering all the dangers around, you can spend a lot of time at the hospital. Lizard Breath's hot, dry atmosphere makes buildings prone to fire; you have an extinguisher. Letting fires get out of hand will result in your getting fried – hospital time. If you meet the local gang of thugs, the Hellcats, they'll try to force you off the road in 'Chicken' (an automobile version of jousting). Crash too hard and... hospital. Meet them at the drive-in movie and their leader may challenge you to a knife fight. Take too much damage and your wounds will be bound in hospital. To get around quicker and make scouting the desert's terrain easier, you can visit the aerodrome and get a lift in a plane. The view from above scrolls as the plane is flown. Running out of fuel or landing badly can mean a visit to the hospital.

As time goes on the ants become prevalent and attacks en masse are inevitable. Grenades and dynamite can be thrown at the ants while trying to escape from their mandibles, but get caught or take too long and, ho-hum, hospital. How the game is completed depends on your fortunes and decisions. Collect all the evidence and you strategically direct the townsfolk and National Guard soldiers, planes and tanks to destroy the ants. Find and navigate the ants' nest and a time bomb destroys the queen, saving Lizard Breath and perhaps even the whole country and planet from death-by-bug. Once again, Cinemaware have produced a game which is high in presentation, cosmetics and gameplay.



Appropriately, they've accurately recreated a movie and included all the sights, sounds and actions of a '50s/'60s monster epic. Gameplay is a refreshing mixture of styles: adventure as initial information is gathered about the ants, arcade as ants are destroyed, and strategy as the National Guard are directed.

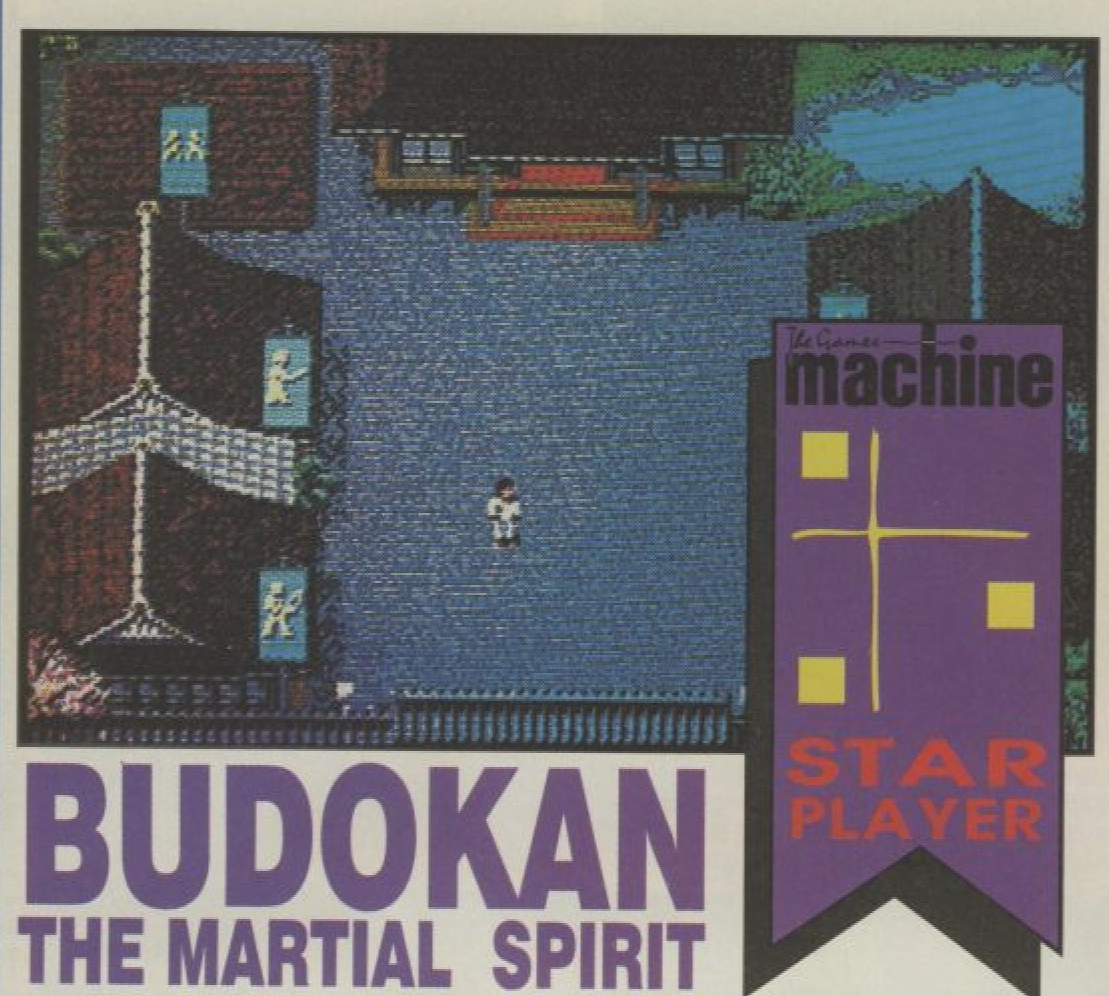
Problems lie with the sometimes repetitive nature of play. Until you know what you're doing, there's a lot of wandering around at the beginning of the game as you try to work out what exactly to do. This isn't helped by the characters you meet who often aren't where they should be. Being repeatedly confined to a hospital bed tries the patience (no pun intended), especially as escaping is so difficult. Happily, familiarisation with the game makes it a compelling challenge. The arcade sections ensuring that, however much you play it, it's never too easy to complete. Another great computer-movie from Cinemaware. It Came From The Desert will have you reaching for your insect repellent in no time at all.

Warren Lapworth



BIG INSECTS, BIG SCREEN

It Came From The Desert took inspiration from the 1954 Warner Brothers' monster flick, Them!. The film was a highly acclaimed and well-directed movie at the time. Again, it's radiation that causes the ants to mutate – but this time it comes from an A-bomb test in the New Mexico desert. Starring Edmund Gwen, James Whitmore, Joan Weldon, and Leonard Nimoy (Mr Spock!), the film climaxes by the appearance of giant insects in the Los Angeles sewers.



BUDOKAN
THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

The Budokan is an octagonal Japanese sports hall built for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and houses the spectacular martial arts tournament that's the centre point for this game.

As a beginner in the arts, such a grand title is a long way off. The first thing to do is to visit the tobiko-ryu dojos – the training halls. There's one hall for each of the martial arts discipline. Depending on the discipline, there are between 31 and 39 different moves to be made. Naturally, it's not easy to remember all these manoeuvres so jiyu-renshu is advised (this is where you can practise against an imaginary opponent).

When more confident, kumite (sparring) with one of three training partners gets you adjusted to combat. Being hit or performing a difficult move reduces your stamina level and consequently your speed. Avoiding strain increases both stamina and Ki, the life energy that flows through and around us (the Force?). The higher your Ki the stronger your blows, but again it's easily lost in combat. The same stamina and Ki rules apply in the free-spar hall: Here you can choose any discipline and use it against a human or computer opponent.

Before entering the Budokan you may wish to consult Tobiko-Sensei, a teacher who you may consult at any time. He's a philosophical old sod, but his words can often be useful. Having practised your pyjama-clad body into a sweaty combat-mad frenzy, it's time for the big one. You get a short profile on each opponent before getting three chances to defeat them using whichever discipline you see fit. But beware, some use the arts of Naginata, Tonfa, Kusari-gama, Shuriken and Yari – these are allunknown to you

You'd be justified thinking that the one-on-one beat-'em-up had been done to death with so many similar games around. However, Budokan is like a breath of fresh air. First-class presentation leads to combat that is truly a challenge to master. The 16 main moves of each discipline are easy enough to become accustomed to; others are often difficult to use at all, let alone put to effective use. Practice makes perfect, of course, and soon you'll have a dazzling array of moves at your disposal.
Fans of beat-'em-ups should put this at the top of their shopping list, and most other arcade players should put it high in their must-have games list. Unashamed yet complex violence is something you don't see often, so do yourself a big favour and take a look at the best – Budokan!

Warren Lapworth

GAME	BUDOKAN:THE MARTIAL SPIRIT
PRODUCER	ELECTRONIC ARTS
VERSIONS	
PC	£24.99

PC

Attractively drawn gates and courtyard set an authentic Japanese scene. Combat backgrounds are beautifully drawn: herons stalk the gardens picking at plants, squirrels scurry down trees and clouds move with the wind. The sprites are realistic and well animated, portraying the action with energy and smoothness. Audio supports MT32, Adlib and CMS boards, but even with a standard machine there are some loud, clear sampled cries to liven things up.

MARTIAL AIDS

Karate – this most famous of contact sports isn't Japanese. It was developed by the warriors of the island Okinawa who adapted it from kung fu and named it Te, meaning hand. It was only used by the Japanese in the 20th century who renamed it Karate – empty hand.

Kendo – the Samurais' most important weapons were their swords. Only they were allowed to use them and, although finely crafted, their razor-sharp blades could make friendly practise sessions a little dangerous. Bamboo practise sticks were adapted and strengthened with leather to create the strong yet relatively safe weapons used today.

Nunchaku – nunchaku consist of two circular, hexagonal or octagonal sticks. Each is about one and a half feet long, connected by a chain or cord. Some exponents spin the device around and over limbs to intimidate their opponents to display the fantastic speed of this weapon.

Bo – a bo is a long oak stick approximately six feet long and usually held with both hands near the middle of its length, but sometimes also held with a sword-like grip.



GATES OF ZENDACON

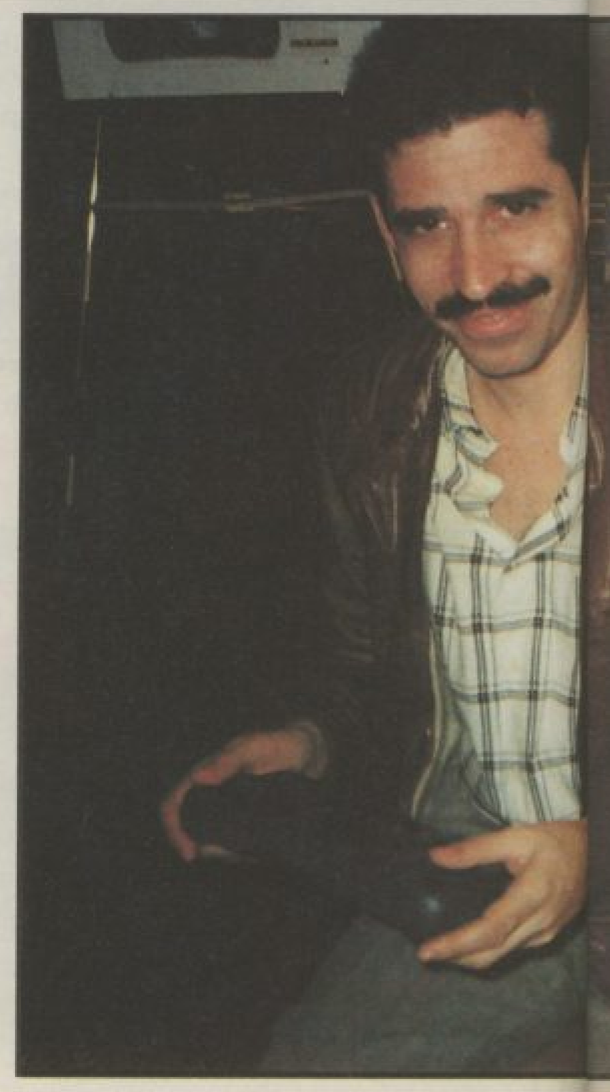
First hands-on review of an Atari Lynx game by our special reporter, Marshal Rosenthal, in America

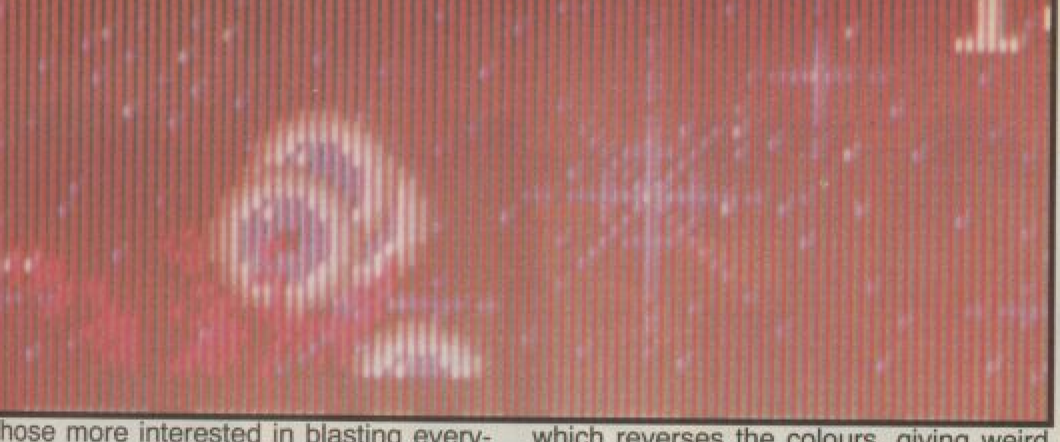
Fancy doing battle with hordes of crafty aliens inhabiting the Galaxy and generally getting up to no good? 'Cause that's what Zendacon is all about. Search and destroy. Stand by for the ultimate in fast moving shoot-'em-up action. It's an epic game even though it's viewed on a screen roughly 2-inches square.

You're just the being for the job, equipped with a sleek star ship, a rapid fire laser, temporary shields, and some nice fat torpedos. Gates doesn't have a fancy opening sequence – just a simple static introductory screen from which you can select certain options (like difficulty level). You're in your starship, a craft that must travel across the playfield (on level one it's a simple star pattern) and avoid or destroy any nasties inhabiting the real estate. Alien ships appear all too regularly to take a pot shot at you. There's also plenty of floating debris that'll turn your cruiser to toast given the chance. Some of the space debris is so small that it takes a jolly (roger) kean eye (ho, ho – Ed) to spot it.

The upper right of the display shows off the score while the lower left informs you of the number of ships remaining.

Rapid depressing of the A button shoots lasers and also drops torpedos which arc downward. You can drop as many of these babies as you want too.





GAME	GATES OF ZENDOCON
PRODUCER	EPYX
VERSIONS	
ATARI LYNX	**£39.95**

ATARI LYNX

A lot of craftsmanship has been put into the design, even when dealing with tiny objects. Colours are used effectively – everything is recognisable, even on such a tiny screen – and the background is unobtrusive. The 16 colour palette changes between levels, the only thing remaining the same is the ship. Now, what about the animation, is it any good? You better believe it – when all the stuff is moving around, it feels more like an Amiga than a hand-held. On a lot of systems, objects start slowing down when lots of things appear on screen. It doesn't happen here. For one of the first Lynx games, Zendacon is incredibly sophisticated. I'll lay bets now that this going to go down as a classic in Lynx entertainment.

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Those more interested in blasting everything in sight will opt for holding down the A button. This pours out laser fire, but loses you the ability to unleash torpedos. Of all the weapons at your command, you'll find the torps most useful – especially as there are a lot of places where you just can't get through without them. Torps come in handy when dealing with a baddie or a flying mine that homes in on you – it's a lot easier to drop a surprise on someone's head than face him up front. Your ship is not only sleek to look at, but takes its fair share of punishment. You've got shields for quick protective bursts – but they're not usually enough to keep you going. Bits tend to fall off your ship when you're hit. Rather than perishing in a glowing fireball, you can survive substantial damage. You might just lose the extra blaster you picked up, one of your wings, some of the superstructure or even your lasers. It's a great way of doing things because it means you can get further in the game, and even repair some of the damage as you go along. Backgrounds are different for each level, and some are plain wild. They move horizontally from left to right at a moderate pace. One of the best levels has a background resembling tiled boxes – much stranger than the star patterns in outer space. There's also a level which reverses the colours, giving weird and psychedelic effects like magenta and black explosions.

Each level ends with the appearance of a gate (hence the name), which allows access to a Star Base and the next level. Of course, arriving there intact can be tough when you're confronted by enemy attack saucers, mini missiles, and flying mines all the way. At the end of each level you'll find a particular breed of nasty. Survive all this and the entrance port of the Gate will finally come in sight the end-of-level guardian and you'll get through to the next round.

Completing a level results in a password which means you can start as the level you died on by entering the code. Every few levels brings you head to head with a chief nasty – some gruesome dork not going anywhere and definitely out to ruin your day. He usually takes up the entire level and keeps dogging you until you wipe him out. Or, as is more likely, he wipes you out. Music and sound effects are very good. An option turns off the music which fortunately doesn't affect sound effects. Explosions go boom, lasers sizzle and background sounds like those in the Space Balls spoof give the game a Star Trek-like feel.



For a game that plays on a two-inch square screen, Zendacon is remarkably sleek and sophisticated. The non-stop bullet-spraying action is guaranteed to keep you hooked. That reminds me, that alien on level 12...

Marshal M Rosenthal



Over the pond and far away, our US correspondent (and part-time Daley Thompson look-a-like) Marshal Rosenthall gives you all the hand-held console gaming info you need to know

FAST FACTS

Amigas are used to develop Atari Lynx games because RJ Mical, the Lynx hardware designer, created the Amiga and is happier using the Amiga's operating system than the ST's GEM. Ironic really because Atari has to sell Commodore Amigas to Atari Lynx developers!

HAND JOB

What? Where? How? Who? If you find out, please tell us. But seriously, Atari's colour Lynx hand-held console – or palm-top as Sam Tramiel calls it – is due for imminent release. That either means you won't see it until next year or you won't see it at all. Perhaps that's a bit harsh. The Lynx is available in the States now, and Atari has been promising to deliver the goods since September 1989. Could be you'll be getting your hands on a machine around Easter time. The Lynx has a resolution of 160 by 102, a palette of 4096 colours with a maximum 16 colours on screen, stereo sound and – like the Game Boy – uses plug-in cartridges. Lynx already sells in the States for £179.95 while the games go for £39.95. Six titles are available: California Games (free with the system), Blue Lightning, Impossible Mission, Monster Demolition, gates of Zendacon, Time Quests & Treasure Chests. And, as you can see, we've brought you the reviews of most of them first.

SPACE ACE

Earth is yet again under threat, but this time from a psychopathic blue alien called Curry Barf... no, no, Commander Borf. Technicolour Yawn (that's enough sick jokes - Ed) plans to use his diabolical Infanto Ray to reduce the human population to infants. Only two people have the courage to stand against him: you (Space Ace) and your lady friend Kimberly. Of course, you can trust a woman to screw things up - Kimberly gets kidnapped and, in the process, causes Ace to be hit by the Infanto Ray. Ace, in his pathetic alter ego, Dexter, now has a big problem in his hands. Well, let's just say he no longer has anything big to boast about.

Dexter, nee Ace, has to save the day by





■ Whilst Ace is your typical square jawed hero, Kimberly (his beloved girl friend) is anything but typical. In most games the heroine screams, faints and sobs a lot - in Space Ace Kimberly is pushy. In Dragon's Lair the heroine squeeked 'save me' before fainting for the umpteenth time. In Space Ace Kimberly shouts 'GET ME OUT OF HERE' in poor old Dexter's ear hole (and looks none too happy that nasty old Borf has got his clammy paws on her). Imagine, if you can, a cross between Joan Rivers and Genghis Kahn - that is Kimberly.

GAME	SPACEACE
PRODUCER	READYSOFT/ EMPIRE
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£44.99
ATARI ST	£44.99

AMIGA

Well, at least the amount of disks has be cut from six to four. But £45 for a game... shfffffff, it's a bit steep. Like Dragon's Lair (reviewed in issue 16), Space Ace is very close to the coin op. The graphics are enormously impressive - and the animation is absolutely astounding. It's like watching a cartoon. The hilarious Dexter/Ace transformation scene is missing, but then there's only so much you can fit on four disks. Sound is sampled straight from the arcade machine, and some of the jingles and speech are brilliant (especially the growling voice of Borf as he taunts you). Some of you will no doubt be annoyed at the limited part you play in the game. As mentioned earlier, you only control Ace's reaction to situations. For hardened blast-anything-that-moves fans this will prove very frustrating. The game's no pushover - it took us several hours to reach halfway mark even with the handy hints supplied to make a reviewer's life easier. Fans of the coin-op will doubtless love Space Ace.

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The Games machine

STAR PLAYER

WHO'S THAT MAN?

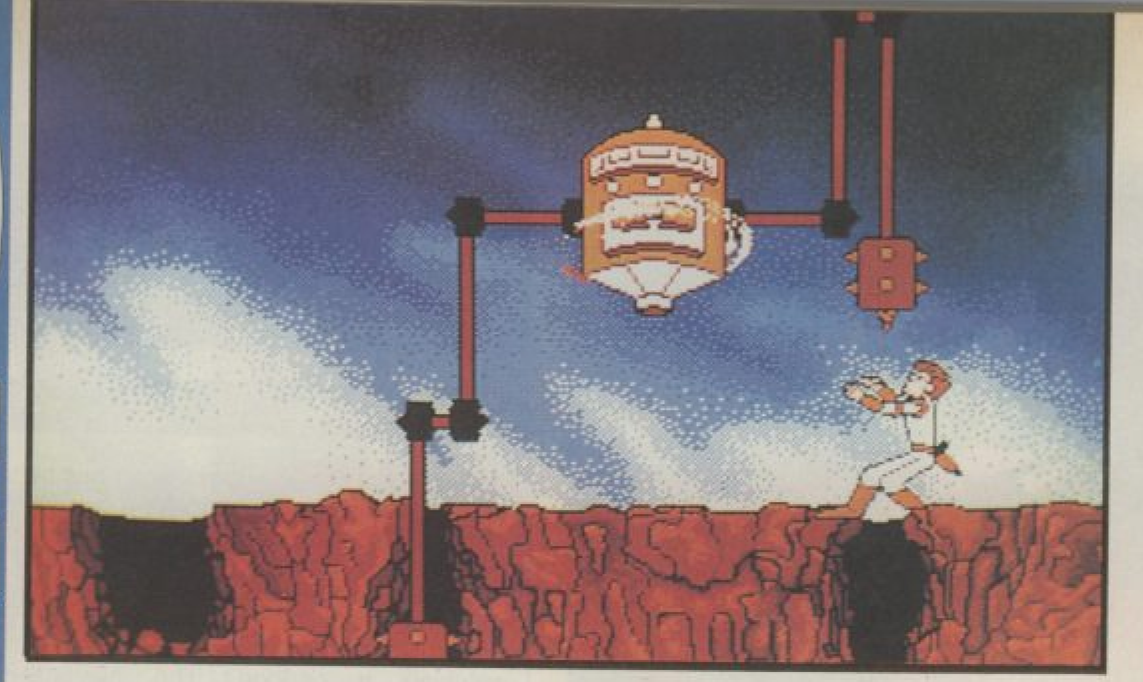
The person behind both Space Ace and Dragon's Lair is Don Bluth. When he was but a wee boy Bluth, Don developed a passion for animated cartoons. He developed his artistic style by going to the local cinema each week and studying the latest Disney cartoons. He also copied every Disney comic book he could find. His big break came when he was accepted in 1956 by Disney studios as assistant to veteran animator John Lounsbery. After a year and a half Don decided he wanted to see more of life and disappeared from the animation scene until 1967 when he joined Filmation Studios as a layout man.

In 1971 he rejoined Disney and took part in their training program for animation. In the eight years he was with Disney, Don had a hand in creating Robin Hood, Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too, the Rescuers, Pete's Dragon, and the Fox and the Hound. In 1979 he again left Disney and went it alone, and after working on several projects he joined forces with two other companies to form Magicom. The new company's first project was 22 minutes of animation for Dragon's Lair, the first interactive laser disk arcade game. They followed this in 1983 with the 25 minutes of animation for Space Ace - the rest, as they say, is history.

Space Ace is reportedly 50% faster than Dragon's Lair, mainly because Bluth received reports that college students were close to completing his first game. He had hoped that it would stump them for a few weeks, although he had purposely made Lair fairly easy. Don was determined to make Space Ace harder - and, with the many monsters, traps et al that Ace has to confront, it looks like Don Bluth has gained his revenge.

Unfortunately laser disk games are very delicate. With all the nasty little kiddies kicking the cabinets in frustration, Space Ace didn't survive for very long. You might be lucky and find a cabinet lurking in the dim and dingy corners of an arcade or two - tell us if you do. Don't fret if you can't find Space Ace or even Dragon's Lair because Don Bluth, even as I write (is that what you call it - Ed), is on the verge of releasing a new title. All we know at the moment is that it is called Time Warp. Space Ace was a masterpiece in its time (and still looks fresh today), but Time Warp should be something else.





rescuing his girlie from the clutches of Puke Bag (listen, I said no more huey jokes - Ed). And, naturally, restore his parts to their former glory... oh, and save Earth.

Space Ace is very similar to Don Bluth's earlier creation, Dragon's Lair. As in Dragon's Lair, you don't control all the hero's actions; just his reactions to situations that arise.

You start the game in your Dexter guise with Honk hovering perilously close to you on an anti-grav platform.

Throw Up (that's it, you're fired - Ed), being the meanie that he is, takes pot shots at you as you leap around dodging the deadly light rays. Next you have to dodge the stomping feet of a floating robot as you race to your spaceship.

After a run in with another couple of robots, Dexter blasts off and heads for Borf's space station. Once on terra firma, another nasty muck monster tries to turn Dexter into lunch. A quick flick of the wrist turns Dexter's foe into a scrumptious fry-up. A crumbling bridge is the next hazard, and one slip here sends you tumbling to your death. Purple monsters now take Ace to be lunch, so a brief scuffle and fire fight later Dexter stands at the mouth of a cave. The cave leads to Borf's lair, but first his security dogs have to be out-paced.

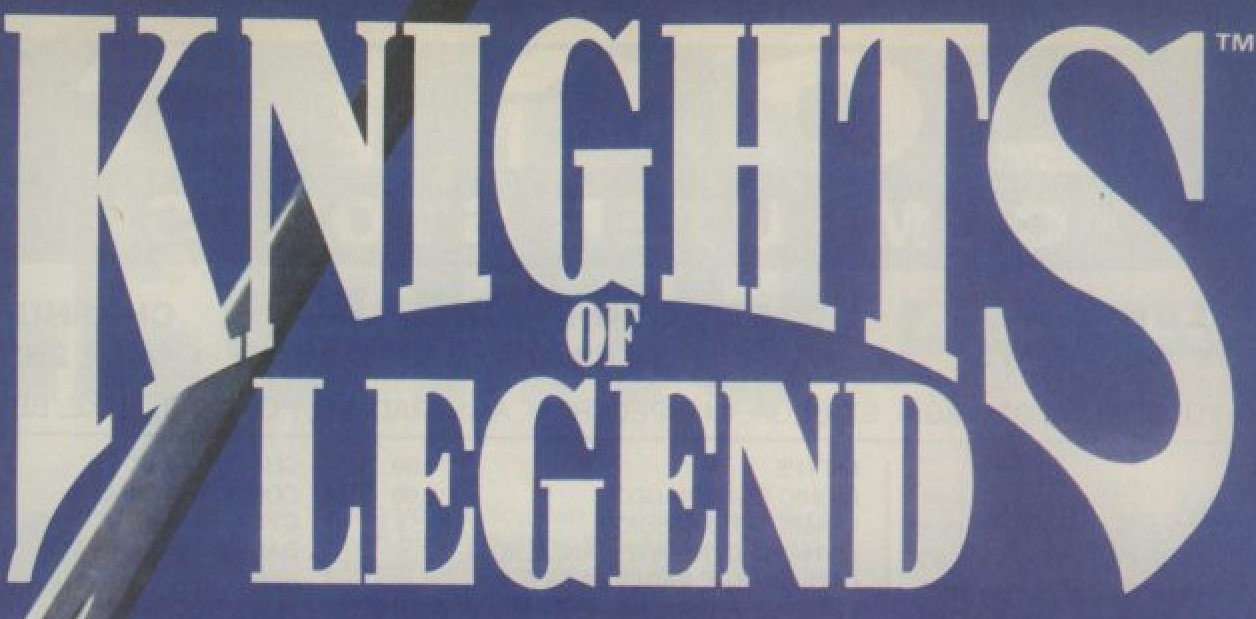
Without giving the whole game away, Space Ace is crammed with high resolution animation sequences and sampled sounds. It's creators, ReadySoft, reckon there are 25 minutes of animation in the game! Without doubt it's an epic - a feature-length cartoon in playable computer form. Astounding. If you want to see your machine being pushed, then take a look at Space Ace. You won't believe your eyes or your ears.

Mark Caswell

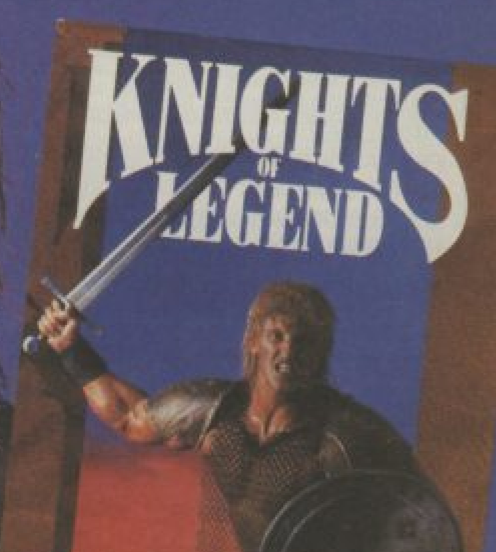
COMPETITION TIME

Yes indeedy, ha ha, it's time to scribble your name and address on a piece of paper and send it to GIMME GIMME GIMME, The Games Machine, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

The first entry to be pulled from Robin's drawers (ugh) wins eight large, slightly used, prints showing off the arcade game in all its glory. Real collectors' items these. All entries must be made... er, sent in, by the time you've finished reading this paragraph. Okay, we'll give you a bit longer. You've got until the 8th of February. Anything received after that date will be force fed to Jonathan so he shuts up about deadlines.



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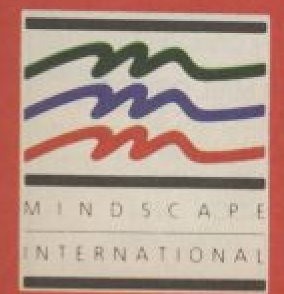


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EXCLUSIVE E...

ELECTRO COP

EXCLUSIVE First hands-on review of an Atari Lynx game by our special reporter, Marshal Rosenthal, in America

You're a part mechanical, part human police enforcer (much like Robocop) assigned to rescue the President's daughter kidnapped by a mad Robot and imprisoned within a fortress. You've only got one hour in real time to accomplish your mission.

On entering the fortress you'll notice how the graphics give the game an excellent 3D perspective. It's very convincing. There are long corridors to travel through which are heavily infested with robots. The robots have a remarkable resemblance to the Walkers in Star Wars.

You've a laser to destroy the mechanical menaces, but some robots don't blow up too easily. By searching the corridors it's possible to find extra weaponry which will give the metal machines a real headache.

It's a good idea to remember the location of weapons: you soon run out of fire power and robots have an annoying habit of knocking your weapon from your hands.

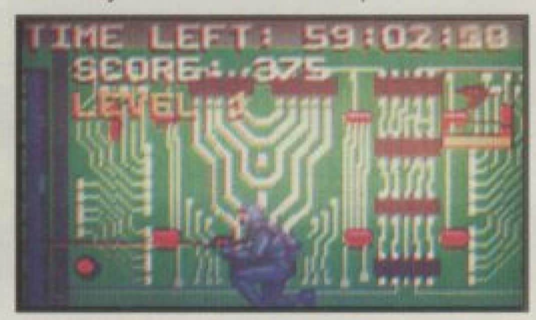
Robots that aren't in your corridor are shadowed – you can see that they're there, but you can't do anything about it until you're in their corridor or they come into yours. You can wait by open doors and blast anything that passes though. Great fun! Bars towards the right of the display monitor the charge remaining in the gun and your life expectancy.

Level one has an elevator that must be accessed. There's a computer terminal nearby, and turning it on gives you the opportunity to do a few things besides trying to crack the code that will open the elevator. Here can be found a series of folders. One has lots of information on the various robots inhabiting the fortress – an essential read. Another folder holds information on special programs that could prove useful once you know what they do, and you find a place to use them. There's even a medical kit so that you can repair yourself.

Remarkably, there's a games folder in the computer. This contains a word puzzle and colour version of Asteroids and Breakout (two of Atari's best from the old days). Of course, the timer is still counting down, but all work and no play makes you a dull electro cop...



■ Some of the backdrops are fantastic. Just look at this one; a mixture of circuitry and silicon. However...



■ ...there are times when too much of a good thing can be a bad thing (eh? – Ed). You're almost invisible against this complex background.

GAME	ELECTROCOP
PRODUCER	EPYX
VERSIONS	
ATARI LYNX	39.95

ATARI LYNX

79

The 3D effect is great. And some walls are composed completely of circuitry and silicon. The results are fantastic. The opening music, which plays right through the game, sets the right tone for this futuristic romp. The sound effects are also good. The graphics as robots explode and crispen in front of your are amazing. All the unexpected twists are enjoyable too. There is one problem though, you don't stand out enough from your surroundings. While the game is enjoyable, it doesn't have enormous depth and you find yourself doing repetitious tasks.

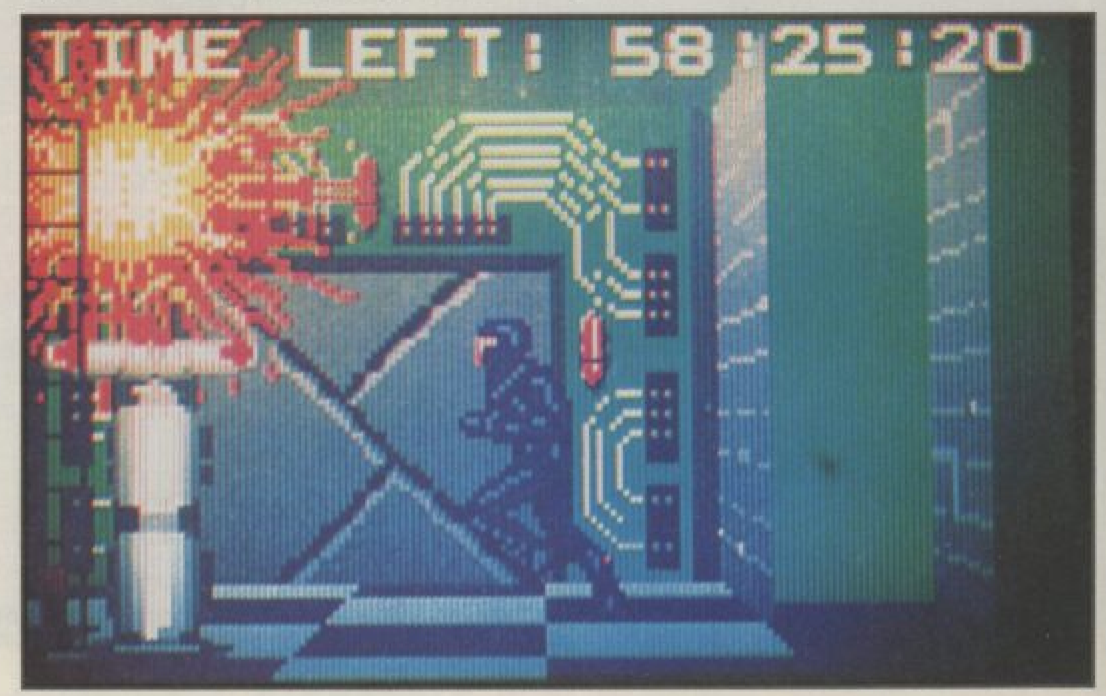
FAST FACTS

The best weapon to get is a combination mechanism which places a barrel on your forehead and in your hand. It's got double the fire power of most, and is difficult for the robots to dispose of.

Strategy takes a back-seat to the action, at least while robots run amok. Animation is fluid, with all the sprites moving reasonably rapidly. The fortress environment has a really great high-tech feel to it. For the first 3D hunt and kill game on the Lynx, it is remarkably polished. The strategy element isn't particularly taxing, but it's got enough unexpected elements to keep you interested.

Marshal Rosenthal

■ You've just wiped out one bozo, but you can bet there are going to be plenty more round the corner.



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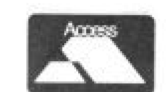
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E-TYPE

If you're fed up with foreign sports cars and Formula One cars dominating the racing scene, here's a release that will be a welcome change for your downtrodden patriotic heart. A good old British 12 cylinder, 5.3 litre, V-12 E-Type Jaguar is the beast you get to drive. Before burning rubber, you can choose the game's skill setting, mouse sensitivity, volume, and gear type (automatic or manual). Automatic gears make the tracks easier to negotiate. Finally, you get to choose the race track (see box below).

You're up against tight time limits – the aim is to cover as much distance as possible within them. Time remaining after completing a track is used on a bonus stage. Obstacles, other road users and the course itself present many problems; the delays they cause waste precious time. Crashing damages the vehicle and if it's handled too roughly breaks down completely. Ah well, back to the driving board... E-Type doesn't break any new ground as far as racing games go; it simply rehashes old and familiar ideas. This isn't too much as what it does, it does well. With both variable skill level and mouse sensitivity, game difficulty can be tailored to your requirements.

Part of E-Type's appeal lies in its humourous touches. The driver and his girl friend are thrown out their seats when they crash, the car's wheels sometimes collapse, road cones spin through the air when hit, and policemen utter a strange sound when you run over them! For challenging races (made more difficult or easier with use of the track designer – see later) with a real sense of speed and fun, go for E-Type's ignition key.

Warren Lapworth

E-TYPE TRACK DESIGNER

£16.95

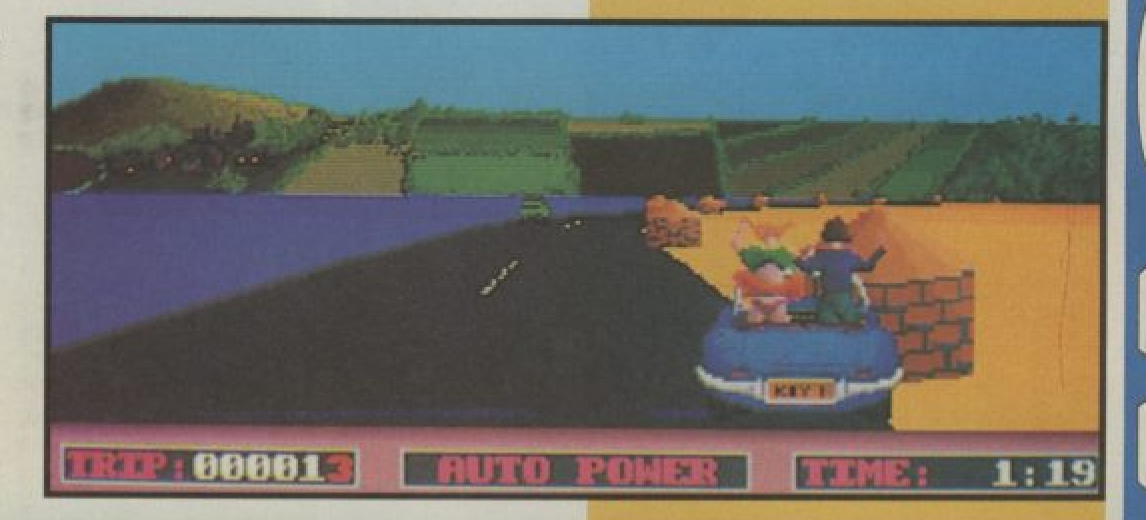
The usual tracks too difficult? Too easy? Not wacky enough? Loading this into your Archie lets you create a new track or adjust a ready-made one. Obstacles can be positioned anywhere on, or by the side of, the track and in any combination. Curves and slopes can be as wild or calm as you choose (six curve settings and 22 height possibilites), and the road can be any of nine widths. In short, a designer that's fairly easy to use and whose results are only limited by your imagination. The perfect complement to E-type.

GAME	E-TYPE
PRODUCER	THE FOURTH DIMENSION
VERSIONS	
ARCHIMEDES	£19.95

ARCHIMEDES

78

An attractive E-Type logo appears before the game. Unfortunately, like the rest of the game, full use of the machine's capabilities are not made. That doesn't mean to say it's a bad-looking game; backgrounds are pleasant, sprites are realistic and most obstacles are good (some are scruffy). The road itself moves in smooth perspective, but the use of stripes on the landscape is a bit naff. The worst thing is that, at some speeds, roadside features appear to stand still and sometimes move backwards. Sound effects are a collection of quality samples.



THE TRACKS OF MY TIRES

Lakes – restful undulating slopes and gentle curves are backed by a scenic view of mountains and forests. Trees line most of the track, but there's plenty of water too.

Antartica – snow, and lots of it, which someone has been busy making dozens of snowmen with. Another fairly straight forward course but a bit strange: sand, pillar boxes and policemen in Antarctica!

Broads – nothing for you, pervert, but glorious rural scenery. Rolling hills and fields appear in the background; gaudy cones ruin the illusion. Some long, tight curves (most with water on at least one side) are tricky to get past. Take your water wings.

Sahara – sand, and lots of it. There is a jarring series of bumpy hills, but the scenery will take your mind off it. Pyramids and the Sphinx are bearable, but British Bobbies, grass and lakes!

Moonlighting – TV series in which Bruce Willis stars. Also a race track in E-Type. Unfortunately the darkness makes road works hard to see. Still, you can't miss all the huge boulders someone's dumped on the freeway – and if you break down there are plenty of phone boxes around.



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NEVER MIND

What an odd name for a game. It could be anything, really, couldn't it? But no, Never Mind is a puzzle game spread over 250 screens.

A level is completed by rearranging tiles on a wall to create a sensible image. Everything is viewed in stunning isometric 3D.

The picture or pictures that form part of each isometric 3D scene have to be completed by swapping over the tiles that cover it. To do this you must walk along all three planes — walls as well as floors — using warp tubes to change between them.

Each level has a time limit dependent on its difficulty. On higher levels chess pieces wander around picking up tiles and dropping them at random. As your job is to place tiles in some sort of order, the chess pieces' antics is can get very annoying.

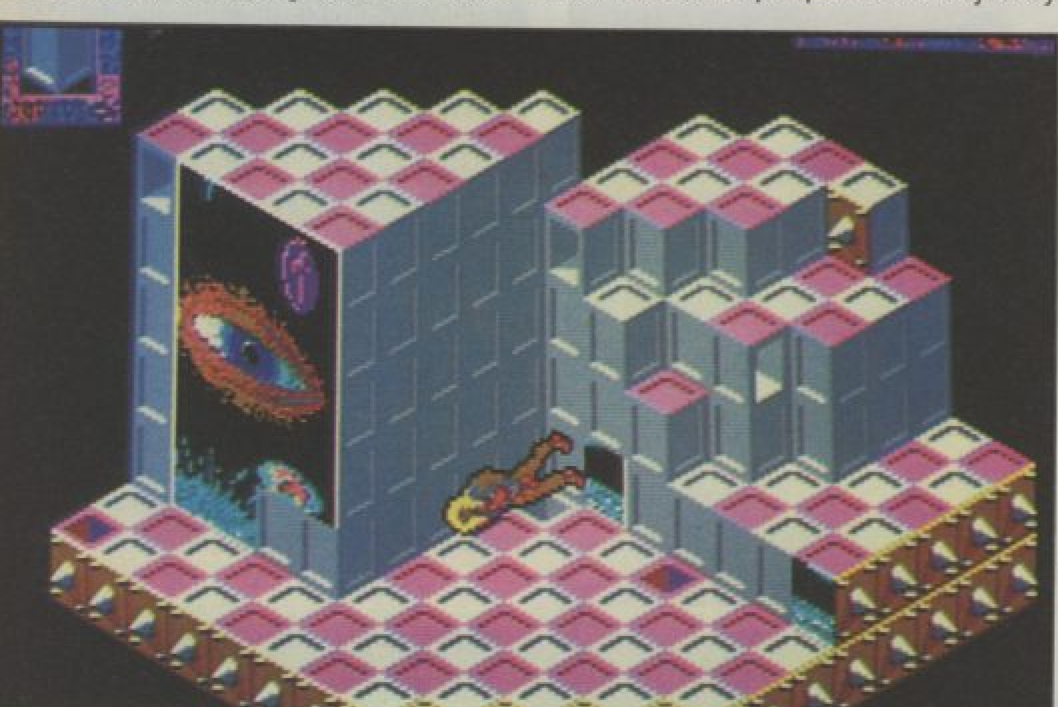
Later levels are designed as groups of islands linked by causeways; after a while the causeways drift away. Dissolving tiles wear away as they're walked on and transporter tiles whisk you to a completely different location.

Never Mind's puzzles are generally jigsaw-oriented — you have to work out which picture square to use to fill spaces and which to swap. When first tackling a level, the destination of each warp square needs to be found and remembered. This task would be no problem, and indeed no fun, there wasn't a time limit. The time limit injects urgency and excitement to the game.

The hectic gameplay is complicated by the chess pieces (you'll soon be cursing them) and the control system. Left and right rotates, forward walks and back uses a warp square. It's very easy to to pull back with the intention of walking in the opposite direction - instead you waste time going through the warp and back again to where you started. With familiarity this problem can be extinguished.

Never Mind's emphasise is on arcade speed and reflexes as well as puzzles. It shouldn't put off action freaks wanting to use their brains a little. An unusual game design with an addictive appeal.

Warren Lapworth





GAME	NEVERMIND
PRODUCER	PSYCLAPSE
VERSIONS	
PC	£24.95
AMIGA	£19.95
ATARI ST	£19.95

PC

75

Precise angular structures stand out well. Colour is bold and the images sharp. The images are all high definition. The main sprite is large and savage-like - it doesn't really blend with the rest of the game. And it walks very stiffly. Sound is little more than a few grating bleeps.

AMIGA

76

There's a help icon which allows you to see what completed pictures should look like. Colour is used more subtly than other versions. In all, it's more professional looking. The main character is more refined than the PC character and walks enthusiastically. Sound effects are flat, but lively music adds sparkle.

CLOWN 'O' MANIA

GAME..............CLOWN O'MANIA
PRODUCER................STARBYTE
VERSIONS....................................
AMIGA...............................£19.99

AMIGA

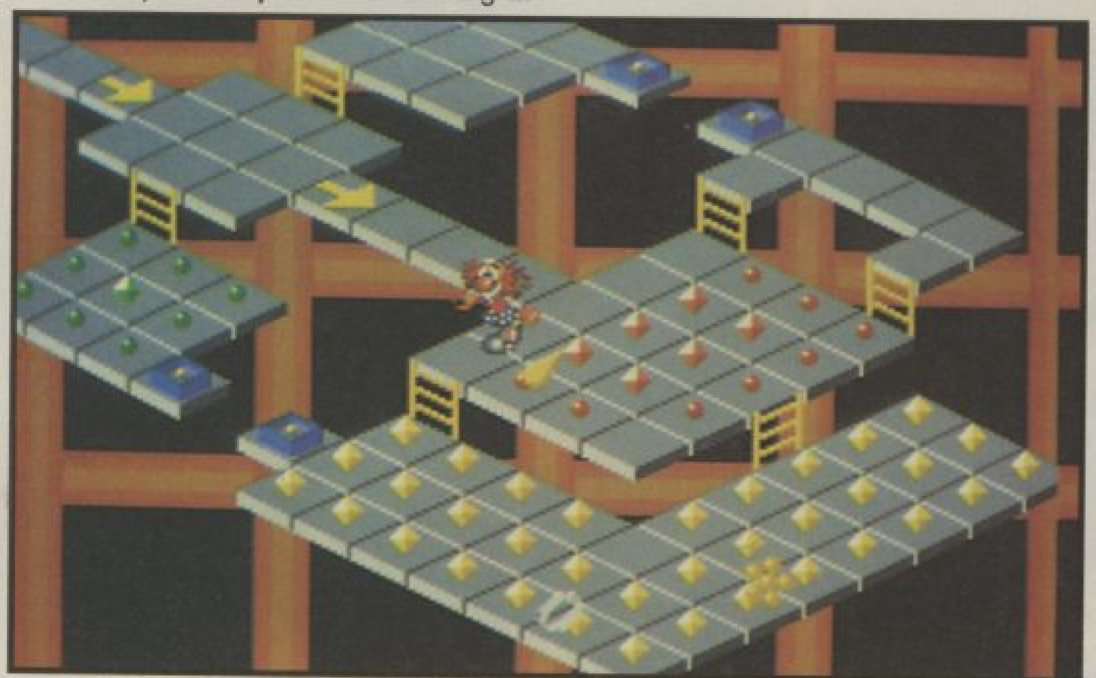
From the outset Clown 'O' Mania is great fun. Graphically the game is superb. Especially the clown's clobber and the myriad of nasty creatures out to kill him. The first few levels are simple, but later one require you to travel in incredibly complex sequences. Sound consists of a great tunes that plays throughout the game and a clear sampled scream as Beepo is killed. The loading music bears a close resemblance to the ditty on Ocean's Batman game. Slap writs... err, wrists.

For many years Beepo the clown has made thousands of people very happy, but unfortunately he has never really had the chance to save any money. Things change when one night Beepo finds an old map that points the way to a strange land filled with precious jewels. On arriving at this magical land, Beepo finds more than he bargained for.

Jewels are scattered around platforms, many of them at different levels, and all are above the ground. This means you've got to tread carefully otherwise you'll fall off the edge. A variety of contraptions are available to help Beepo on his travels. For instance, ladders connect platforms that are close together. For those difficult to get at islands, less obvious means are available. Teleporters move you around when you walk into them and funnels spiral you down to platforms below. Apart from the jewels, other objects present themselves for collection. Some, like razors, can be used as a weapon against the nasties. Others, like the thing that looks like exploding sphere, can be used to jump to certain platforms. Other objects award bonus points. The monsters that inhabit the magical world aren't too happy with Beepo's existence, so they tend to chase with extreme zeal. Beepo isn't initially armed, but by collecting the razors he can give any stray meanies a nasty headache. Also, if he has enough energy, blue coloured pyramids can be collected to block off areas and prevent monsters getting close to Beepo.

Some will complain that the game is little more than a very pretty Pac-man clone, but I liked it.

Mark Caswell





Beepo BITS AND PIECES

There are many objects available to help Beepo: Beamers – transports you from one point to another. Razors – useful as weapons against attackers. Jumps – essential for reaching out-of-the-way platforms. Pyramids – two types appear. Blue merely block the path while white destroy enemies. Trampolines, Volcanos, Funnels – move you to different parts of a level. Clown Masks – extra life. Power Pills – repels monsters for a set amount of time.

FAST FACTS

On certain levels you'll find three numbered or coloured plates. You'll be rewarded with 10,000 points by setting the plates to have the same numerical value or colour.



GAME	DRAKKHEN
PRODUCER	INFOGRAMES
VERSIONS	
AMIGA	£29.99

AMIGA

94

Well, Infogrames have done it again. After the excellent Sim City reviewed last month, RPG fans are now presented with Drakkhen. You don't have to be an RPG fan to enjoy the game: there's a bit of almost everything in the game to cater for all tastes. Presentation is excellent - the 78 page novella that sets the scene for the game is a masterpiece of atmospheric prose that makes you feel as though you were there (hey, you're supposed to be reviewing the game - Ed). Graphically and sonically Drakkhen is very good; the monsters that attack you come in many guises (there are over 100 different types). Both character and enemy sprites are well drawn and nicely animated. Some of the sound effects that accompany attacks are truely frightening - a good example is the howling noise heard when attacked by the huge dog-like head. Drakkhen is similar in style to Empire's Sleeping Gods Lie, but it contains so much more.

DRAKKHEN

Know, then, Prince that between the years when the seas drank Atlantis and men walked the Earth, dragons reigned supreme. But now the Drakkhen race is all but dead - indeed, the last great dragon has just recently been slain by an errant knight. With the dragon's last foul breath, a message so terrible was uttered. A new age dawns - the age of the dragons, the Anhak Drakkhen (what are you talking about? - Ed).
Mankind didn't realise the threat it was under until a ship called HMS Shadrak returned from far away lands with a chilling tale. A wizard, one of the fortunate survivors, told of the ship coming across an island populated by Drakkhen. It was, reported the Wizard, the dying curse of the great dragon that re-awakened the Drakkhen and set them on a rampage against humans.
Led by Drakkhen princes, the lizards decide to skewer humans with swords. Of course this can't be allowed to happen, so four brave adventurers must venture forth, tally ho and all that stuff, to stop the Drakkhen from running riot.
You have the choice of either playing with the characters provided or creating your own from scratch. The four castes represented are fighter, priest, magician and scout. Each can be either male or female. The first task upon arriving on Drakkhen island is to arm your heroes; this is achieved by clicking on each character icon placed in the top left hand corner of the screen. You are presented with each character's statistics (health, stamina, strength, and so on), and a list of the items carried. Items in red are either being worn or in the characters hand, green denotes they are being carried.
There are two means of character movement; either individually or en masse. As you explore the island you'll notice some very sharp climatic changes, so one minute you could be wandering through a pleasant green landscape and the next up to your knees in sand or snow. On your travels you'll meet other characters - some just want to chat and can pass on info vital while others will go all out to kill.
With the set of nine command icons you can inspect items, take objects, activate mechanisms (raise drawbridges, for instance), greet strangers, impress strangers, question strangers and if all else fails kick the doggy doo out of strangers.
The fate of humanity is in the hands of your four brave adventurers. Can you save the World? Probably not. But you can save your pennies to get this RPG.



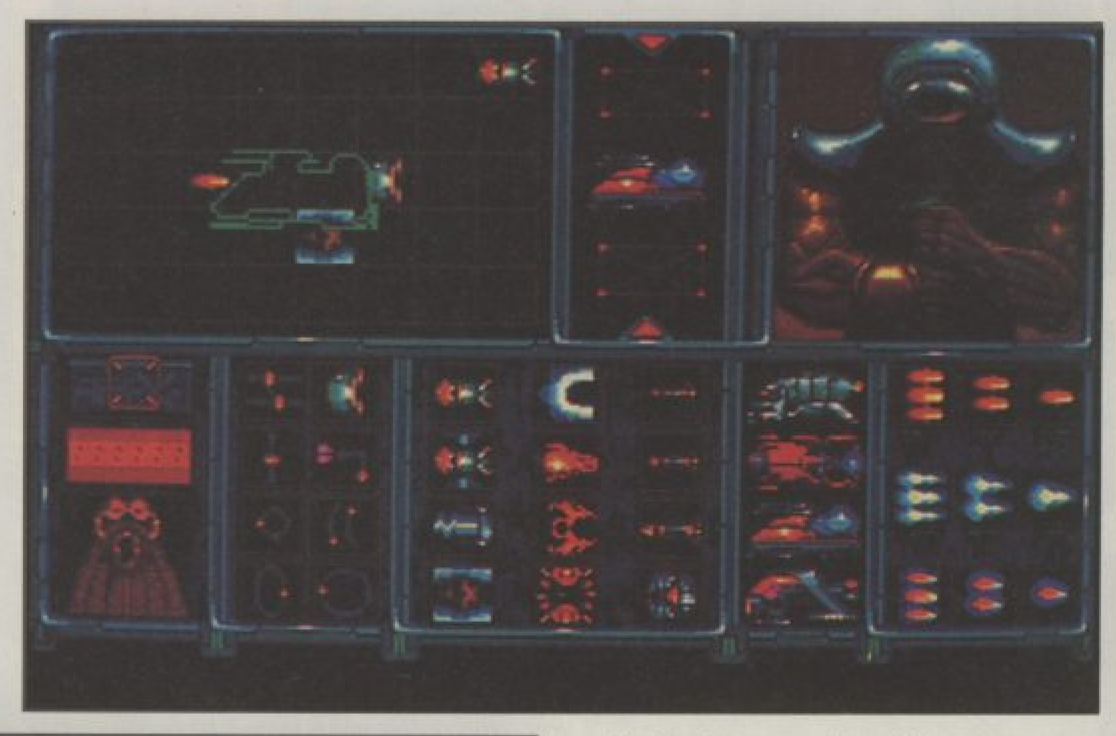
Mark Caswell

X-OUT

Let's get one thing straight before we go any further, the game is pronounced 'Cross-Out' and not 'Ex-Out'. Thank you.

The aliens you've got to rub out come from the far reaches of space and - in the tradition of the latest horror movies such as the Abyss, Leviathan and Deep Star Six - the monstrous creatures take to the oceans, a habitat much better suited to their slimey skins. To repell the aliens' assaults, a project called Deep Star was initiated. But, thusfar, it's been a resounding failure. So guess who's been drafted to ensure the project turns into a success?.

With Deep Star's most advanced technology at your fingertips, you prepare to lead the latest counterattack. You have a limited amount of cash to spend at an armoury on essentials... like a battle ship. There are four ships to choose from, and they come in four different sizes. Each can be fitted with between three and 12





weapons depending on the ship's size.

Once the ship is positioned on the design grid, you can choose from

28 different types of weapon. There are three strengths of shot (these can fire in one, two or three directions simultaneously), three strengths of guided missiles, a bouncing bomb and a smart bomb. Flames can be fired in straight lines or arcs. An incredible achievment considering you're underwater!

Six drones can be fixed to any vertical position on your ship and travel at the same speed as your craft. They firing automatically. Drones can be sent out and retrieved at any time. Unfortunately collecting the drones is a hassle as you have to fly over them. But if you buy a drone collector one key press will recall them all instantly. Money solves all problems.

There are six different forms of outboard satellites — multiples to you and me. Plain satellites stay at fixed points around the ship, vertical ones move up and down. Oval, large, small and half circles move in flitting paths around the ship. Homing satellites head for the nearest alien.

As many ships as possible should be armed before launching into a level. The levels are much like any other horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up with countless waves of aliens. Huge end-of-level monsters are inevitable (although X-Out's are original in design), but punches aren't pulled — there are big mid-level monsters too.

Between levels you get a chance to visit the armoury; new ships and weapons can be bought with cash earnt or gained from trading in used hardware.

X-Out is one of those ever-rarer, but always rewarding, shoot-'em-ups that is best described as classy. Presentation is fantastic - nowhere better than in the armoury. As the shopkeeper burbles away in the corner, the only limit to the diversity





and sheer power of your ships is your imagination — and your spending power.

The variety of weapons is highly commendable, the range of satellites most pleasing, and the originality in some of the weapons a treat.

You can search for powerful combinations of weapons and stick them on all your ships, but X-Out's versatility shows itself when you mix-and-match; having different capabilities on an untested ship makes losing a life much less irritating.

Lives can be difficult to hold onto in X-Out, particularly when facing the outrageously big monsters. Intestinal creatures with sheep skulls, robotic wallabies, long-armed craft and lesser assailants all make their mark and are a reward to see and an even greater one when killed.

X-Out takes elements from other shoot-'em-ups, coin-ops and originals alike, adds ideas of its own and wraps it all up in quality presentation, pretty graphics and great sound. What more could a trigger-happy gamesplayer ask for?

Warren Lapworth

The Games machine
STAR PLAYER

GAME	X-OUT
PRODUCER	Rainbow Arts
VERSIONS	
	Amiga £19.99
	Atari ST £19.99
	C46/128 £9.99 cass
	£14.99 disk
	Spectrum £8.99 cass
	£12.99 disk
	Amstrad CPC £9.99 cass
	£14.99 disk

AMIGA

89

X-Out starts very well, with a dark, lovingly-shaded pilot growling 'Get ready for Crossout!' He pushes a throttle forward while controls all around his cockpit flash and bleep. The scene then changes to a hatch that's been built into a rock face. The hatch opens and an insect-like ship emerges and speeds away. All this is accompanied by dramatic music, which uses the brilliant sounds created using the TFMX sound system (see box). The armoury screen is well laid out and easy to use. It's made more appealing by the evil-looking shopkeeper. In the game itself, scrolling is silky smooth and graphics are all bright and colourful. Some sprites are short on detail but others, like the animated player ships and impressive large monsters, make up for it by being works of art.

SOUND ON SOUND

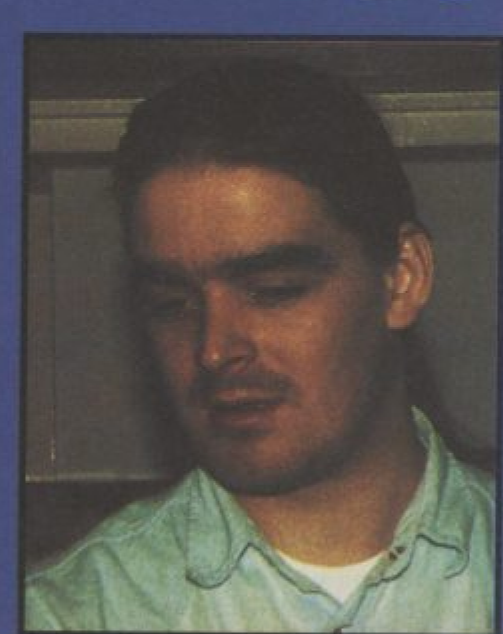
The TFMX (it's something in German which I can't pronounce let alone write) music development system used to such impressive effect in X-Out was developed over two years by Rainbow Arts's sound maestro Chris Hulsbeck. Chris's aim was a simple one: produce the best sounds possible using as little memory and using up as little processing time as possible. He's suc0000000000000ceeded, X-Out's epic title music takes up 60K, and in-game effects and samples less than 30K. The music playback routine takes up only 16 raster lines (the time taken for the computer to draw 16 lines of pixels) of processor time. TFMX can be loaded into any part of the Amiga's memory and can use 256 samples simultaneously. Effects like vibrato, portamento and echo can be added to sounds. Also, TFMX can distort and reuse sounds in countless ways, even reacting to fit the particular game situation!

16 INTO 8 WILL GO

Ex-Elite programmer Byron Nilsson, pictured here, has been given the tough task of coding the Spectrum and Amstrad conversions of X-Out; a job he's been given just three months to do. But he's quietly confident. His colleague, Paul Walker, at Arc Developments is looking after the graphic side of things.

Paul and Byron have co-produced the Spectrum and Amstrad conversions of US Gold's Forgotten Worlds. The

graphics and flight patterns of the 16-bit X-Out will be converted directly to the 8-bit machines. This ensures, says Paul, that both the look and playability of the Star Player original will be maintained. In their next project, Paul and Byron will be cleaning up American streets in Crackdown.



HARD DRIVIN'
Tengen/Domark ■ Amiga ■ £19.99

Reviewed TGM026



Probably one of the most eagerly awaited arcade conversions of the year is fantastically addictive. The Amiga's sound and graphics hardware really make this game shine. Every bit as good as the Spectrum and ST versions reviewed last month. This one game you don't want to miss.

Warren Lapworth Machine update 90%

AMEGAS
Smash 16 ■ Amiga ■ £4.99

Yet another variation of Break Out; an obvious fact that the game freely admits to in the instructions. Mouse guides the bat and deflects a bouncing ball onto a pattern of bricks, destroying them one-by-one. Some bricks release a pod which, if collected, endows the bat with such useful abilities as laser fire, magnetism and extra balls. As levels are completed, special bricks are introduced, like spreaders, killers and exits. Amegas has a crusty, old-fashioned look to match its crusty, old-fashioned gameplay. Backgrounds are garish with repetitive patterns. Bricks and pods are just plain rectangles and the bat is a variation on the Arkanoid design. If you've played one Breakout/Arkanoid clone you've pretty much played 'em all. Amegas certainly doesn't stand out in the crowd – trampled into the ground by it, more like. It's mildly entertaining for a short time (that is, for about three games), but isn't worth the asking price, low though it is. Amegas is not the sort of game that should be loaded onto an Amiga.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 27%

HELLRAISER
Exocet ■ Amiga ■ £19.95

Reviewed TGM022

The Amiga version of Hellraiser is here, though to be honest it needn't have bothered. The game is as bad as the ST version: the graphics are in no way close to the Amiga's capabilities and gameplay has all appeal of a major road accident. Do yourself a favour and steer well clear of this.

Mark Caswell
Machine Rating 35%

SUPER PUFFY
UbiSoft ■ Amiga ■ £24.99

Reviewed TGM015

Puffy and Puffyn are back in the maze fighting for their lives in the Amiga version of this cute Pacman-style game. Graphically and sonically the game is great. If you've seen other versions - and liked what you saw - you'll like this version even better.

Mark Caswell
Machine update 81%

SUPER CARS
Gremlin ■ Amiga ■ £19.99

Bet you wondered where Ron and Nancy got to after they left the Whitehouse? Well, they're in Gremlins latest release manning the news desk. Actually, I lied. It's another Ron and Nance at the desk, but it grabbed your attention didn't it? (No! Now get on with it - Ed). Super Cars is a three stage racing game in which there are nio rules. Each stage consists of nine tracks, and you must finish each track in third position or+ better to move on to the next. There are three types of car on offer: Toraco Neoroder, Vaug Interceptor and Retron Parsec Turbo. You start with a 1.6 Toraco, but as you build up the cash reserves you can enter the shop and purchase a more powerful motor.

You start the game with £5000 cash, so a new car is out of the question to begin with. By visiting a garage you can buy power steering, front and rear missiles, a and turbo charger. It's then onto the race proper.

The track is a tortuous one, so drive like a loony but watch you don't crash too often 'cos this will end your chances of fame and fortune. Super Cars is graphically very good, though the characters look very Cinemaware-ish (sorry Gremlin). Sound is also good with a funky tune playing throughout. Despite the presentation, playability is pretty dismal.

Mark Caswell
Machine rating 65%

THE CYCLES
Accolade ■ Amiga ■ £24.99

Reviewed TGM026

From the programmers of Test Drive comes a motor cycle racing game that pees all over the Amiga version of MicroStyle's RVF Honda. Graphics scroll smoothly and move like greased lightning (well fairly healthy lightning anyway). As with Test Drive, the difficulty level can be changed from wimp to Barry Sheene mode. So, if you fancy a quick whizz around some of the most famous motor cycle racing tracks in the world, buy the Cycles today.

Mark Caswell
Machine update 84%

KICK OFF EXTRA TIME
Anco ■ £9.95

Loading Extra Time before Kick Off itself gives you many extra features. There are four new tactics. Blitz is all-out attack, at

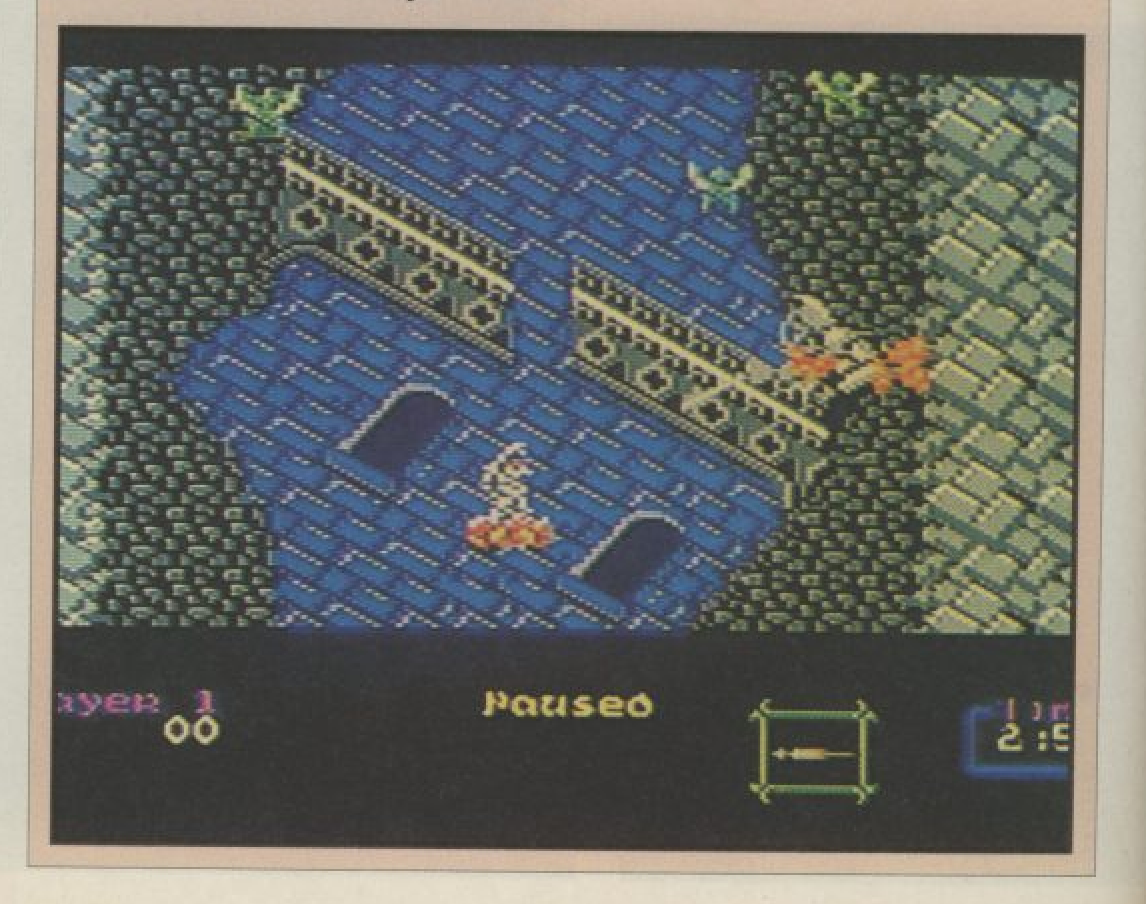
GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS
US Gold ■ Amiga ■ £24.99

Reviewed TGM026

Arthur the knight is on his travels again, tackling even more creatures than before with his array of lances, swords, daggers and fireballs. But this time he's also got magic up his sleeve to tackle the more powerful monsters. Better proportioned graphics with more colours and higher detail give the Amiga version a closer arcade look than the ST version.

Highly atmospheric music and brilliant sound effects add a suitably spooky feel.

Mark Caswell Machine update 92%



HARDBALL II
Accolade ■ Amiga ■ £24.99

One of the original and best baseball games is back, bigger, better and... very similar to before. One or two human players choose their teams from the roster.

Hardball II has many options. Players' stats can be viewed and customised, fielding strategies can be changed, 16 features can be switched on or off to tweak the skill level, and there are four different types of action replay, used with VCR-type controls.

Animation is smooth and realistic, but definition is iffy. Pitch and crowd are rough and grainy in appearance.

Hardball did pretty much all you can do with computer baseball and most games of the sport since have been replicas. Gameplay couldn't be effectively changed so the only thing that could be improved is options and field tactics - and that's all that has been done in the sequel.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 70%

SPY VS SPY
Wicked Software ■ Amiga ■ £9.99

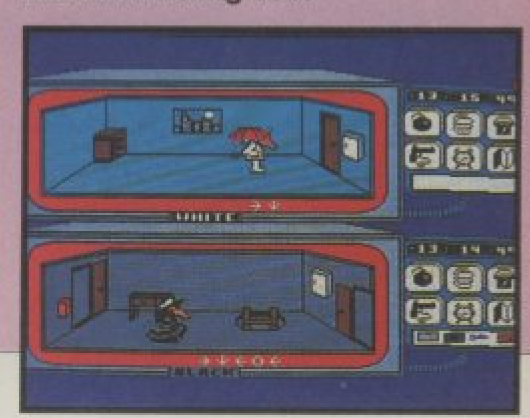
The misadventures of black spy and white spy were first shown as a comic strip in Mad magazine many years ago. It's also a long time since this game first appeared on the 8-bit machines.

The aim is to collect passport, money, plans and a key from hiding places around a flick-screen Embassy. There's only one of each item so the spies have to fight over them. You can battle your opponent by beating him over the head with a club or, alternatively, set a trap for him to bump into. By using the Trapulator you can position buckets above doors, place guns with strings connecting the triggers to door handles, situate springs to throw victims across rooms in tricky places, and drop time- triggered bombs all over the place.

Spy Vs Spy has changed very little in the translation from 8-bits. The spies have more room to wander around in and the graphics are cleaner, but that's all. Music is a wimpy version of the already insipid C64 tune of about five years ago.

The game idea is great, but in execution it falls flat. For the first few plays it's fun, but the novelty wears off quickly.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 65%



the cost of defence, Lockout is the reverse, Criss-Cross emphasises ball possession and Falcon is based upon fast wing attacks.

Wind conditions can be switched on and there are wet, hard, artificial turf and soggy playing surfaces which affect ball movement and player performance. Tackles also now affect how well a footballer plays — his shooting, passing, tackling, pace, aggression and stamina attributes all suffer.

Changes that directly affect control are the ability to take you own goal kicks, chosen from nine types, and full power control. When in possession of the ball, the pixels of the marker (that shows which sprite is under joystick control) turns white as kick strength builds up. The direction of the joystick when fire is released influences kick direction.

Most Kick Off owners are very happy with the game; using it with Extra Time should make them ecstatic. Kick Off is now variable in many ways so that its difficulty and gameplay can be tailored to your own preferences, psycho or sedate tactics, bouncy or dead pitch, whatever. It's the perfect complement to Kick Off and should help convert other people to its delights as well as giving hours of even more involving matches to existing users.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 82%

THUNDERCHOPPER
SubLogic ■ PC ■ £24.99

The latest from the flight simulator kings puts you at the controls of a specially adapted Hughes 530 MG Defender helicopter. You're armed with chain gun, Zuni rockets, and TOW and Stinger missiles. The chopper's detection system consists of an infra red scope, laser radar and zoom camera.

Thunderchopper's five missions emphasise different helicopter skills. Flight training, rescue alert and rescue at sea all focus on evasive and precise manoeuvres. Combat alert and armed escort require use of the combat and defence systems.

While speed is fine on a decent PC, the graphics are dismal (almost 8-bit in its roughness). The control panel is plain, buildings and vehicles blocky, and features on the landscape often move irrationally.

Thunderchopper handles reasonably well, but in the crowded airspace of the flight sim market that's just not enough – especially when you consider it only has five missions. Taking graphics, missions and flight handling into consideration, Thunderchopper is little more than an 8-bit product. Only rookie pilots need apply.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 67%

PICTIONARY
Domark ■ PC ■ £24.99
Reviewed TGM025

Very similar to the Amiga/ST versions. Clear board, although with strangely pale-coloured squares, and a very precise, professional drawing section. Weak effects, but just as good a translation of the board game as the other 16-bit incarnations.

Mark Caswell
Machine update 80%

BAR GAMES
Accolade ■ PC ■ £24.99

Yup, another slant on the multi-event 'sports' theme, but this time up to four players can participate in five adult games.

The first game being Liar's Dice. It's similar to a card game in which you bid on what numbers you've rolled and what you reckon your opponent has rolled. Wet 'n' Wild is much more risque – it's a wet T-shirt game! As the selected victim, male or female, walks left and right, a sprite above tips buckets of water over them. The result, of course, is that their clothes start clinging to their body. Air Hockey is a variation of Pong. Pick-up Artist, as if you couldn't guess, tests your ability to chat up girls (bet you didn't too well at that one, Warren – Ed). Last Call is set in a bar; as customers arrive, the correct strength level has to be set to slide a beer down to them.

Bar Games is fun, but unimpressive to look. Playability varies from event to event, but rarely rises above the mediocre. Pick-Up Artist is just a matter of trial and error, Liar's Dice downright boring (why doesn't a losing computer character remove clothing?) and the others little better. In short, the only thing to generate any real interest is Wet 'N' Wild – and that's down to the perv factor!

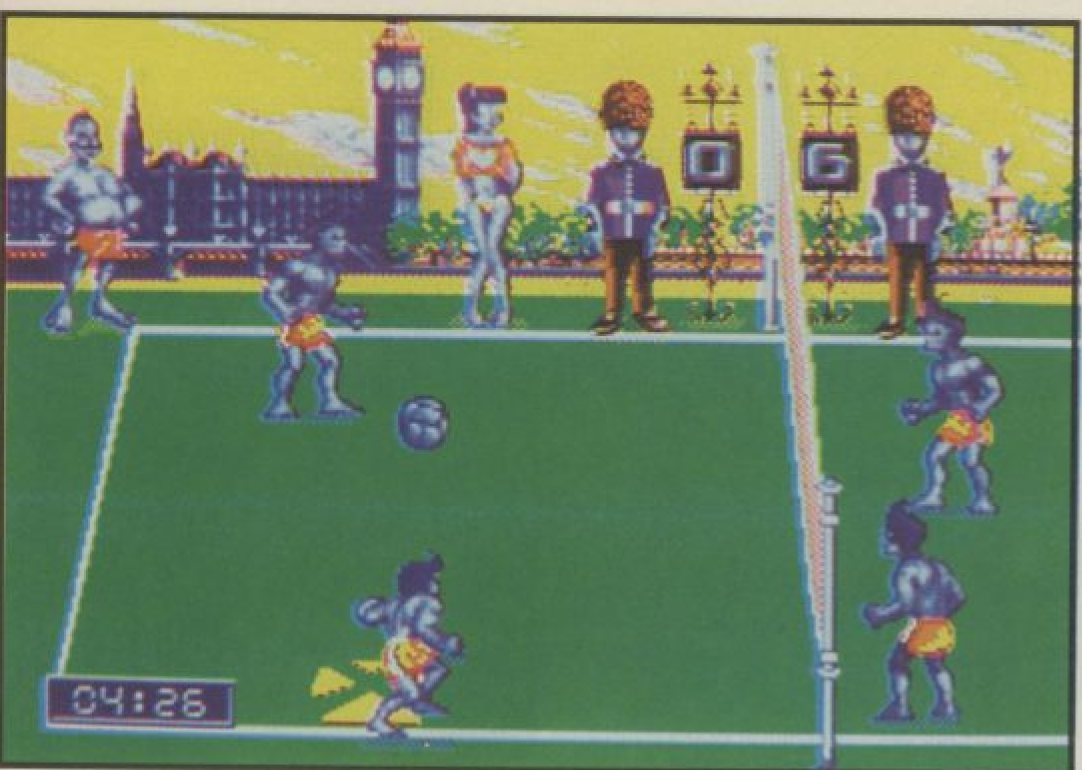
Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 61%

HOLE-IN-ONE MINIATURE GOLF
DigiTek Software ■ PC ■ £24.95
See Amiga section

Only five courses on the PC, but as they're worse to look at than the Amiga's, don't complain. More simple still, contours are shown with thick, ugly black lines. Sound is just a couple of bleeps and keyboard control is terribly slow.

Zany Golf is available for the PC (for the same price) and has much, much better graphics and much higher playability. It's clear what you should do if you want a crazy golf game for your PC.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 49%



BEACH VOLLEY
Ocean ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Reviewed TGM025

London's top Volley team are back on the ST, and are as athletic as ever. Graphically as good as the Amiga offering, but the sound suffers the usual malady of being squeeky. Also missing are the excellent speech samples that introduce each venue, but that is a small niggle. Beach Volley is a fun way to acquaint yourself with a sport that is big over the pond, but is sadly under-exposed here.

Warren Lapworth
Machine Update 82%

TURBO OUTRUN
US Gold ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Reviewed TGM026
The Ferrari F-40 is revved up and ready to go, the beautiful blonde is at your side and the 959 owner is firmly up your nose. Graphically Turbo Outrun on the ST is as colourful and detailed as its Amiga twin. The other road users are as big a pain as ever, but as always a jab on the turbo button sends you rocketing off into the distance. If you liked the original, Turbo Outrun is for you.
Warren Lapworth
Machine Update 85%

TABLE TENNIS SIMULATION
Starbyte Software ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Before you tackle a match in this latest ping pong program, it's probably wise to try the practice option. The bat, chosen from a selection of six, automatically moves to intercept the ball's path. You choose and time the strokes as a machine spits out balls to a selected pattern.

Matches can be one or two players, doubles or singles, one, three or five sets long and 11 or 21 points in length. Up to 12 human players can compete in a world cup.

The table, bats and decapitated hands holding the bats are bland. Sound is weak. The real problem, though, is that table tennis games came and went years ago. They only appeared in the first place because of Konami's arcade machine.
Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 41%

AQUANAUT
Addictive ■ Atari ST ■ £24.99

You are Commander Ric Flair, star of the Aquanaut divers, and must find the pesky Zeekee before he gets up to no good. He's somewhere in the Atlantic and you must



explore three large scrolling areas of ocean, seabed (oceanbed?) and underwater cavern to discover him. Sharks, swordfish and jellyfish attack, but there's an everlasting supply of harpoons at your disposal.

Aquanaut's greatest feature is the graphic sequence where Ric dives into the water and flips around; smooth animation and realistic movement. Sprites serve their purpose but lack detail, backgrounds look good but scroll judderingly, and sound effects are poor.
Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 59%

MOONWALKER
US Gold ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Reviewed TGM026
Whacko's still at it, though the ST versions suffer the same malady as the Amiga and C64 games reviewed last issue. The presentation and graphics are slick on the ST, but the first two levels are as zzzz-inducing as ever. Get an insomniac friend to play the first two sections for you. From there on the game ain't too bad (no pun intended).
Warren Lapworth
Machine update 63%

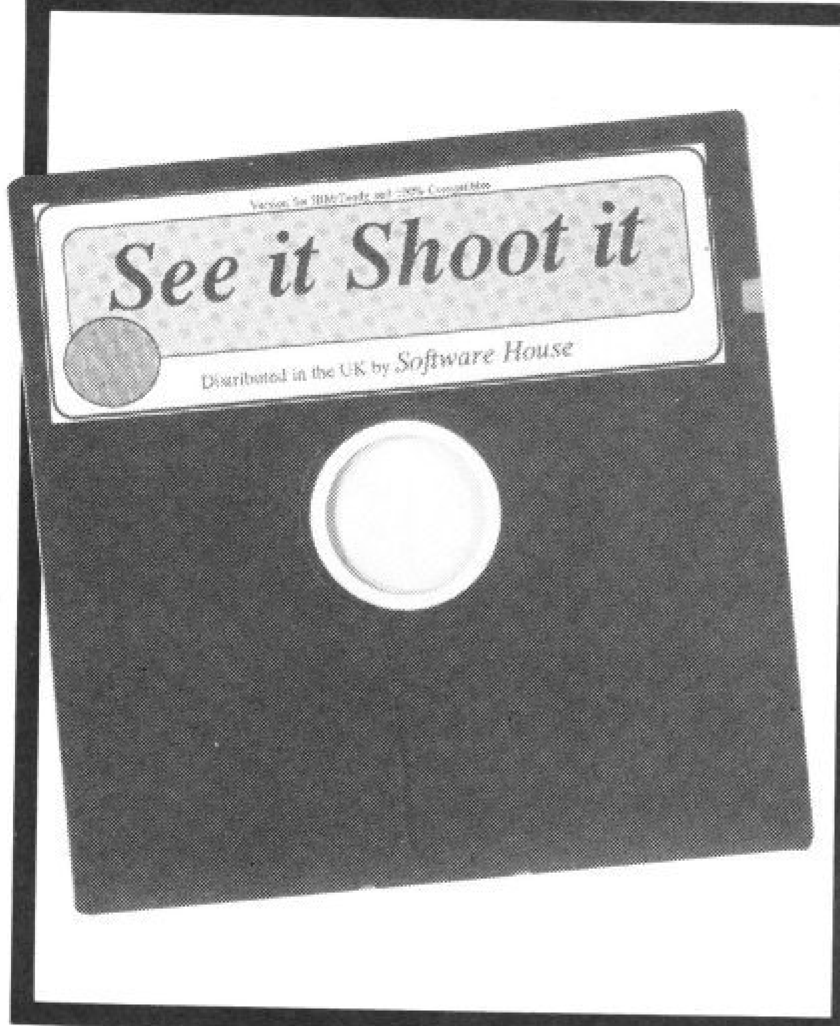


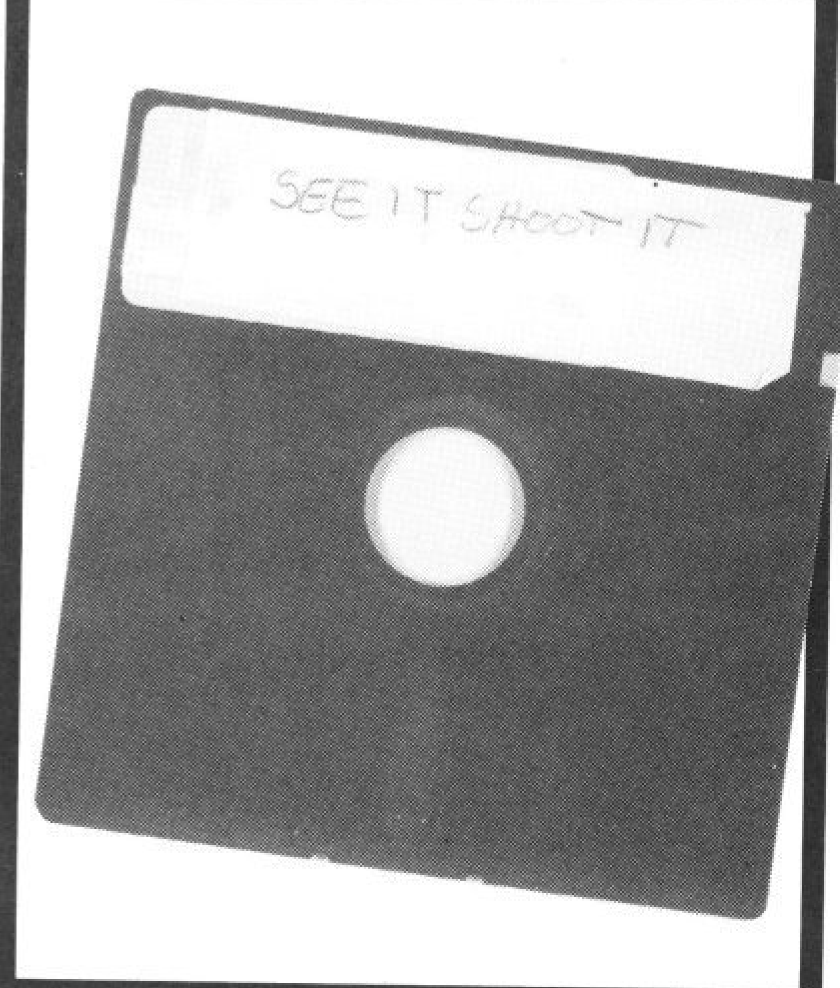
THE UNTOUCHABLES
Ocean ■ Atari ST ■ £19.99
Reviewed TGM024
Ol' blue eyes is back. The Untouchables is a classic slice of life in the Windy City of the 1920's. Life was tough as a Federal Agent, and Mr Ness and Co prove it in this six-level blasting game. The ST version is well up to the standards set by the Speccy and C64 games reviewed three issues ago, so say hello to Mr Capone with your .357 Magnum.
Mark Caswell
Machine update 93%




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PIRACY IS THEFT

NEUTOPIA

Hudson Soft ■ £24.95

Plenty of Japanese text here but the gist is that a fair maiden has been kidnapped by a dark, ghostly figure and you as the hero must find her. A high, near-plan view of the immediate area is given and another screenful is dragged into view when the edge is reached. Lizards, sand creatures, sentient bubbles, crabs and giant flies pester you and steal life energy but a quick bodge up the bottom with your sword soon sends them packing. Entering houses lets you converse with occupiers (in Japanese, of course), often giving you useful objects like energy-replenishing potions and bombs.

Typically cute and colourful Japanese sprites wander over bright but highly repetative backgrounds that would've been easier to traverse if they'd scrolled. Animation is minimal and sound mediocre.

To get the most out of Neutopia you really do need to be able to read Japanese. Without knowing exactly what's going on, it's just a rather drab wander around hitting things with your sword and gaining unexciting objects. But to be honest, it very much appears that reading Japanese would only let you know what's going on and wouldn't improve gameplay one jot.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 43%



WANTED

Sega ■ £19.95

Go for your gun, punk! Your Sega lightgun, that is, because Wanted is one of the rare and wonderful games that uses the lethal-looking peripheral. In this one you're the new sheriff of a Wild West town and so must clear it of all the bad people who venture into it. The sprite moves slowly to the right, the screen scrolling to keep up with him, and the gun is used to shoot any enemies that step in front of pop up in windows. Speed is the key, as their bullets eat away at life energy.

A big stumbling block with Wanted is its difficulty. As you frantically try to pump the bad guys full of lead they casually take shots at you and use up your energy with worrying speed. Getting more than two screens into the game takes a lot of doing and just taking potshots at pop-up targets isn't really interesting enough for you to want to practice that much. If you've already got a lightgun then by all means give this a go but don't make it your reason for buying one.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 67%

CASINO GAMES

Sega ■ £24.95

With five different games, Casino Games is reasonable value for money. But none of the games really grab the attention. Gameplay is all very so-so and unexciting, and some of this is that you're not risking and winning actual money — numbers on a TV screen mean almost nothing. If you'd like computerised card with one or two things extra, Casino Games may be just worth the investment.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 70%

ALL-IN BOXING

Alien Images ■ £19.99

For a bit of senseless violence and brain damage in 32-bits, look no further. After chosing a boxer it's best to practice before getting in the ring. Combinations of the five available punches thrown at a punchbag earn energy and bonus points and the faster you can get the rope to spin in the skipping section the more energy is earnt. All this energy is used in actual matches, against the computer or another human player. If your energy falls low from taking too many blows you're knocked out, but waggling left and right gets you back on your feet. A report is given after each round.

Oh... dear. This looks awful. The boxers are big pink blobs with childishly drawn faces and poor animation. Backgrounds are simple and sound is a few words of speech and some boring thwacks.

The rotten graphics amplify the dreadfully dull gameplay. The control system is awkward, requiring two keys to be held down simultaneously for several of the moves, including those to simply move the boxer backwards and forwards. Providing you've got a reasonable amount of energy, the computer can be beaten by repeating the same move but even when up against a human opponent no excitement is generated. A self-inflicted KO from Alien Images, 'Arry.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 21%

ARCADE SOCCER

Fourth Dimension ■ Archimedes ■ £19.95

Football simulation finally makes it to 32-bit. In addition to being able to alter obvious things like match length, team formation and control system, there are weirder variables like weather conditions, tackle sound effects ball pattern which may be manipulated. For a quick kickabout, you can dive straight into a friendly match. However, Arcade Soccer holds 24 teams in memory if you fancy entering a league match. The teams can either be controlled by human or computer opponents. Matches consist of a dull plan view of the pitch supplemented by a transparent radar display in the top left corner of the screen. Although scrolling is fine, sprites are simple, strangely shaped (the footballers look like hunchbacks) and badly animated. The ball appears to stick to dribbling players' chests and, when kicked, bounces in a strange manner and tends to ignore silly things like momentum. Sound is muffled, but the title tune and in-game samples are pleasing.

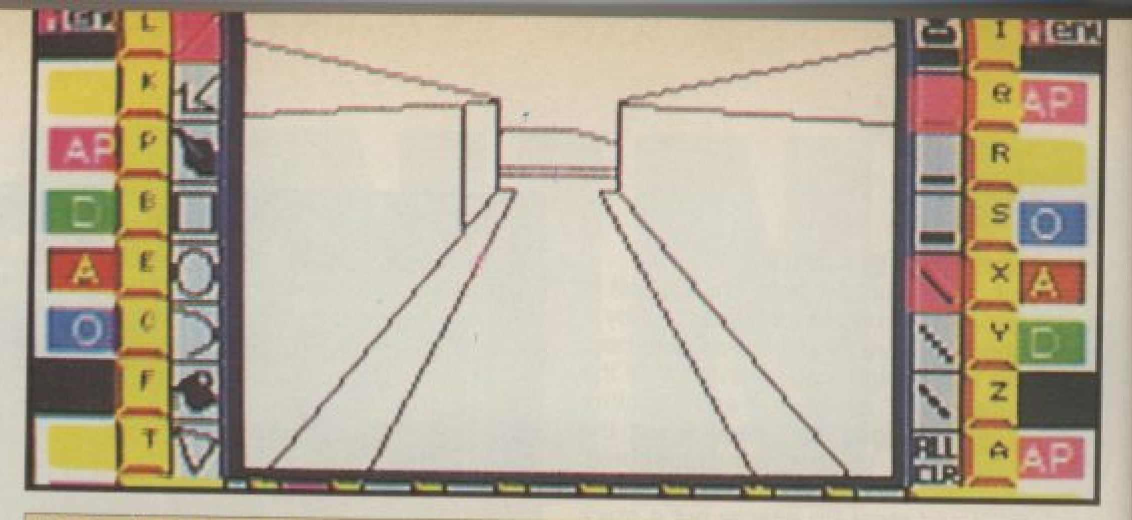
Weak graphics, completely unrealistic ball and player movement, and dubious control (certainly not the 'total control' touted on the packaging) mean this is a pale shadow of Anco's Kick Off, the game it tries to emulate. The action is limited and certainly not arcade-like.

Warren Lapworth
Machine rating 56%

C64

CHASE HQ
Ocean ■ £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Originally reviewed: TGM025
The Spectrum version showed that all the addictive gameplay of the popular Taito coin-op could be fitted into an 8-bit computer. This version shows how bad conversions can be. Sprites are blocky and vague, backgrounds are mostly monochrome, and screen update is slow. Roadside features jerk terribly from the horizon and grating sound effects ignore the C64's three channels, so some effects are interrupted to make way for the others. Gameplay is ruined by all these faults; buy Turbo Out Run instead.
Machine update 20%

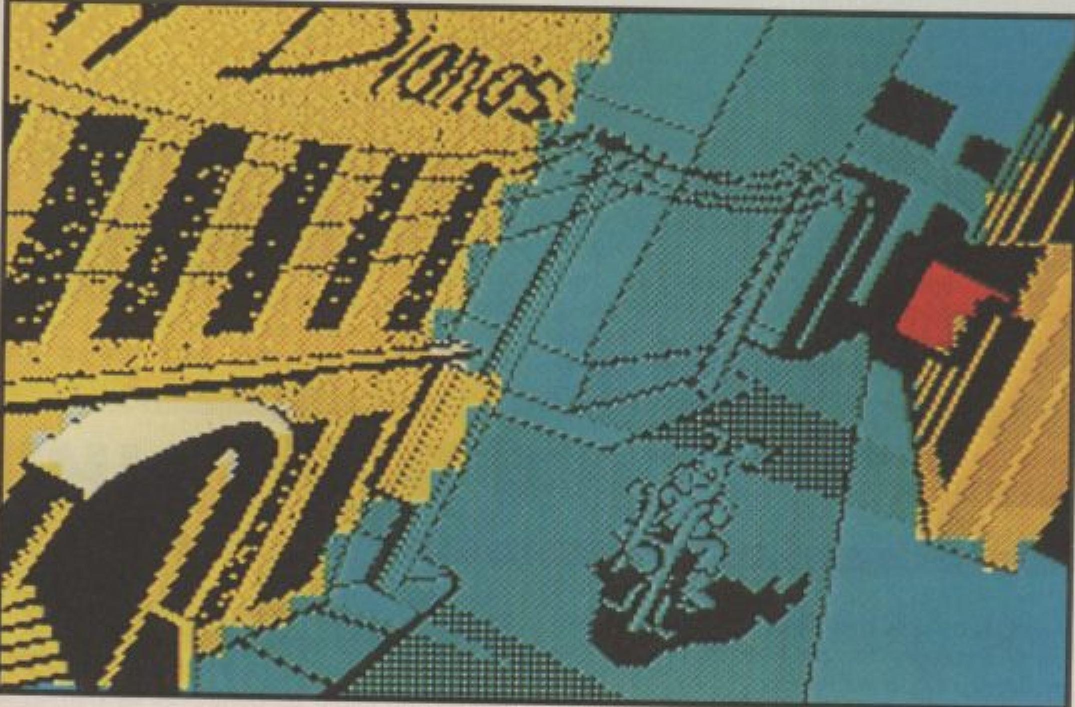


PICTIONARY
Domark ■ C64/128 ■ £14.99 cass, £19.99 disk
Reviewed TGM025
The board could've been drawn more sharply; the graphics are blocky. Although it's slightly scruffy and some functions are slow, the drawing section works well. Sound effects are very crude and drawings are multi-loaded which spoils the flow of the game.
Mark Caswell Machine update 70%

SPECTRUM

GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS
US Gold ■ Spectrum ■ £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Reviewed TGM026
Arthur's dusted-off the suit of armour he used to such good effect in Ghosts 'N' Goblins and donned it for his second jaunt. The monsters are bigger, stranger and have more teeth than before, but Arth's as determined as ever and this time Merlin's taught him some magic. Software Creations obviously viewed Chris Butler's amazing conversion of Arthur's first game when designing the C64 graphics. Scenery is of a similar fashion to Goblins, but with greater detail to fit in with the Ghouls coin-op. Sound effects are good and music even better.
Mark Caswell
Machine update 91%





MOONWALKER

US Gold ■ Spectrum ■ £9.99
Reviewed TGM026
Who's bad? Whacko and his moonwalking in this game. The first two levels suffer the same problems as all the versions reviewed so far: they're boring. The rest of the game isn't too bad and the graphics look pretty. But that isn't enough. You'll have more fun playing a Michael Jackson album than this game.
Jasmin Umlate
Machine Update 60%

CPC

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean ■ Amstrad CPC ■ £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Reviewed TGM025
Roy Adams and Co are back again, and up to their necks in trouble. The action, as with the Speccy game, comes thick and fast. For the first few attempts the sheer number of terrorists keeps you on your toes. Scrolling has never been a strong point of the CPC, and Operation Thunderbolt is no exception. But who really cares when the game is as fast and frenetic as this.
Warren Lapworth
Machine Update 88%



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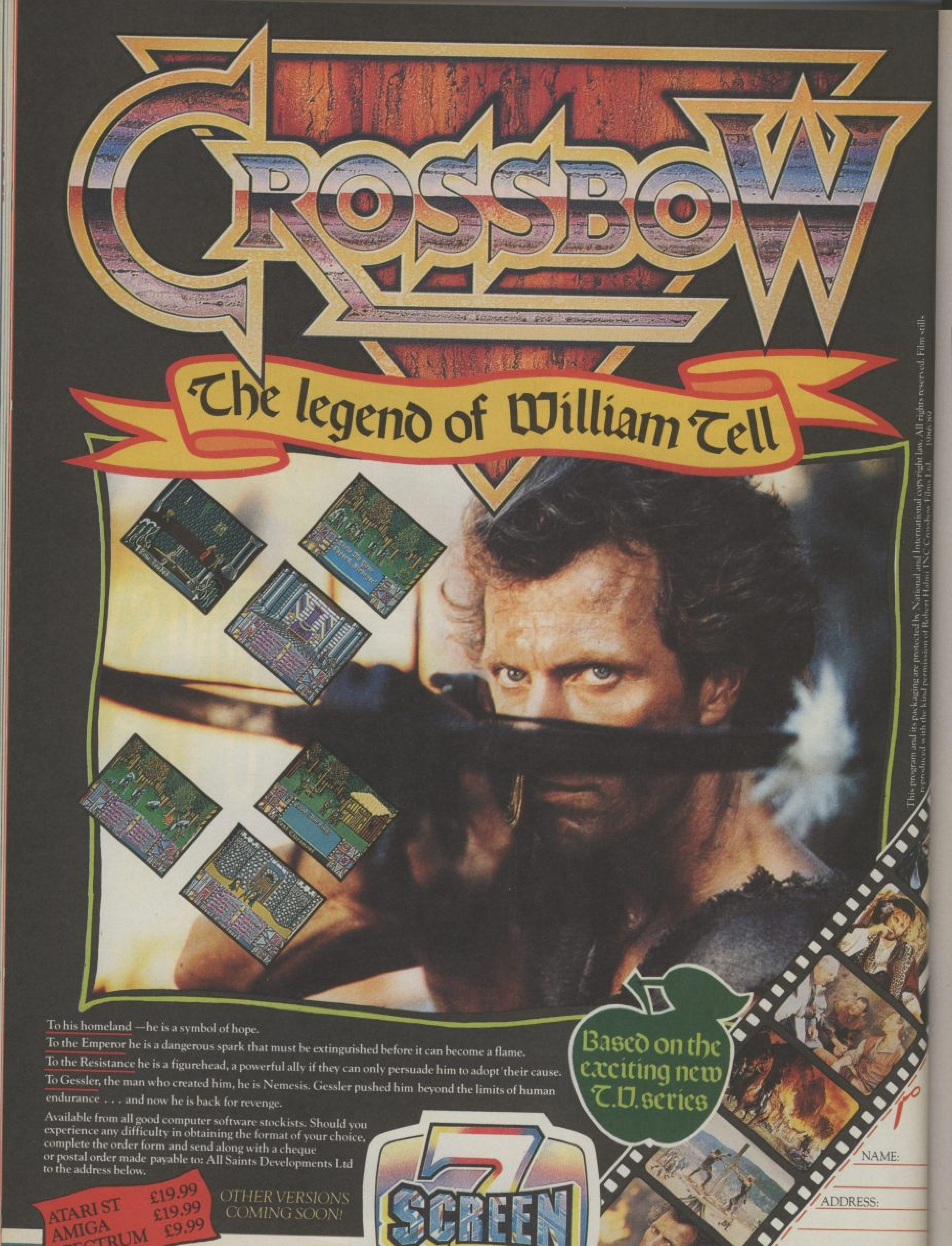
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Finger Painting



Over the coming months TGM will be covering all aspects of computer graphics — from reviews of the latest utilities to hints on how to improve the quality of your graphics and animations. But what better way to kick off a new column than to see how the professionals work. Robin Candy spoke to Peter Florence at Digital Pictures to find out how they create their award-winning animations brought to the fore with such commercials as Access credit card and Yoplait yoghurt.

Digital Pictures was born in the experimental department of Slade College of Fine Art, 1982. Founders Chris Briscoe and Paul Brown had previously worked together with a medical college using computer graphics to help in facial reconstruction surgery. Seeing the commercial possibilities of their work they formed their own company to find new methods of creating images. Later joined by Steve Lowe and Peter Florence, Digital Pictures was the first company in Europe to produce high-end 3-D animation work for film and television companies, and have remained at the forefront of computer animation ever since.

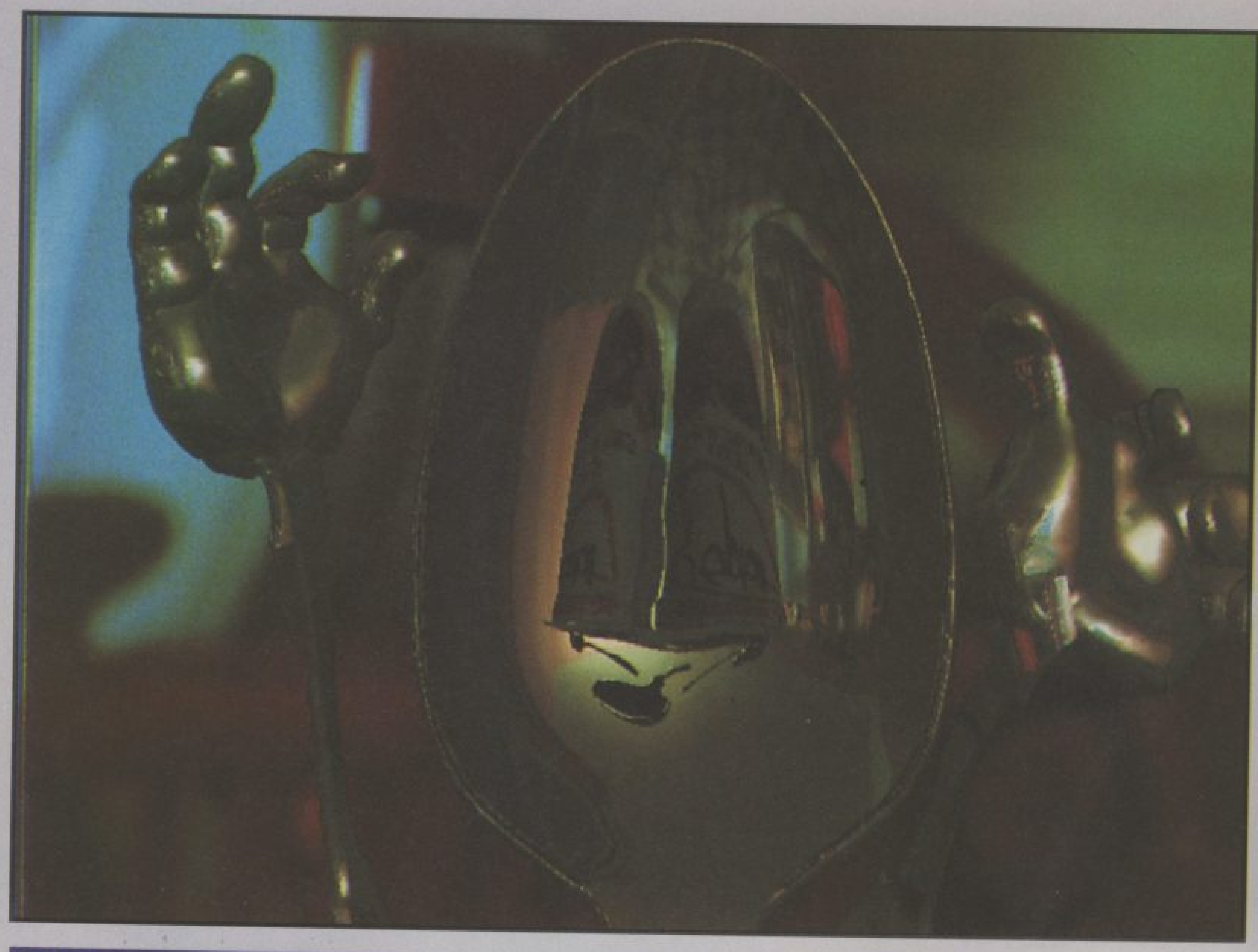
Their first commercial release was a Michelin advert in 1983. Since then, they've won numerous animation awards for their work. Animation like the stunning sequences of the Smarties and Access TV adverts.

Peter Florence: 'Where we're unique from most other computer animation companies is that we've written and developed our own software in-house. One of our main strengths is that we can produce custom solutions to particular design briefs. If the client comes to us and says they want water flowing through walls — or whatever the effect may be — we can adapt our software to their specifications. We've got a research and development team continually developing new software. There are a few dozen computer animation companies in Europe but only a few are doing things on the same scale as us. Most companies work with a graphics package and workstation hardware but don't actually create their own software. So what they produce is limited by the capabilities of the software that they're using. We now produce our own graphics package called Digipix which we are looking to sell worldwide.'

The storyboard

The process of creating an animation for a client starts with a storyboard. Basically this





Florence on films

'You're going to be seeing a lot more computer animation in feature films. When they originally looked at Star Wars they looked at ways of doing all the special effects as computer animations. They did a lot of tests at that time but the equipment just wasn't capable of producing the results that they wanted so they had to make do with using the traditional method of scale models and hand-painted backdrops. It's certainly possible now. Walt Disney are starting to use computers for animations in their films more and more.

'It's now easier and quicker to do a lot of special effects on computer. I think that computer graphics will eventually take over from the scale model method of special effects. With a computer you don't get problems of scale, camera angles or matting. All those sorts of things can be handled very easily with computer animation.'

is a script which depicts the sequence of events within an animation along with sketches of what is occurring in each segment of the sequence. Digital Pictures have their own production arm which works closely with their clients to come up with a storyboard that satisfies the requirements.

'Some clients come to us and ask us to work with them and come up with the ideas and the execution of the ideas. While other clients have a very strong idea of what they want and come to us for our computer animation skills. There is still a lot of input from ourselves but they supply the overall direction of the work.'

Once a storyboard has been agreed upon, the next stage is to look at what the principle elements of the animation are. In the case of the Yoplait commercial the animated spoons are the stars of the sequence. These were constructed as a wireframe graphic within the computer. Digital Pictures have designed their own modelling software to do this. Images can be constructed using polygons, rather like the methods used by games like Starglider 2, to generate graphics, but of course the computers that Digital Pictures use allow them to create far more complex images. Once an object has been defined in terms of spacial coordinates, the computer allows you to rotate the graphic and view it from any angle. However, this is just one method used to create computer images. Some objects are too complex to be drawn this way but can be scanned into the computer using a 3-D digitiser.

3-D digitising

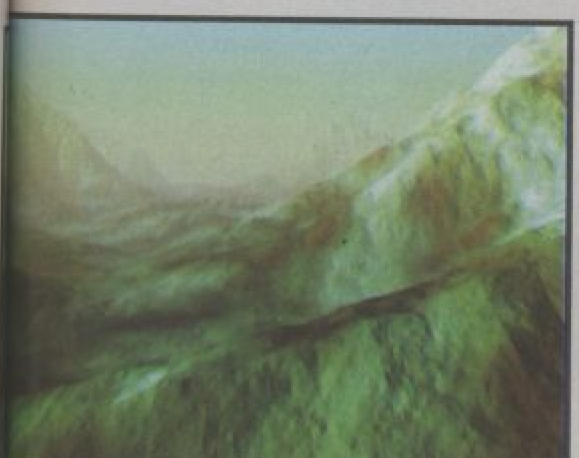
The object that you wish to digitise has to be placed on a digitising pad. This pad generates a field around the object and is sensitive to the movements of a special electronic stylus which is connected to the computer. You then trace around the object using the pen and the computer translates the stylus's movements within the field into the 3-D spacial coordinates which form the basis of an image.

Both of these methods are excellent in producing amazing 3-D images but aren't suited to creating certain effects, such as

Digital work

Animations from Digital Pictures that you may have seen on your TV include: the title sequences for Central Television News, Panorama, Wired, Opportunity Knocks, All Clued Up, Television South, the BBC 1988 New Year titles, a BBC documentary on the Korean War and commercials for Yoplait, Smarties, Michelin, Commodore, Amplex, Access and a soon to be completed B&Q advertisement.





realistic landscapes. To do this Digital Pictures use complex mathematical techniques, generally known as fractal modelling. The results of which were seen on the Korean War documentary shown on BBC1 in 1988.

The next stage of the process is to look at what animation is required and how the overall sequence is going to work. Once again Digital Pictures have developed their own software to handle the animation. Not only does it allow you to alter the viewpoints from which the sequence is viewed but it can also lend a helping hand in creating the actual animation. In the Yoplait yoghurt spoons commercial where the spoons jump

The TGM quick guide to creating digital pictures

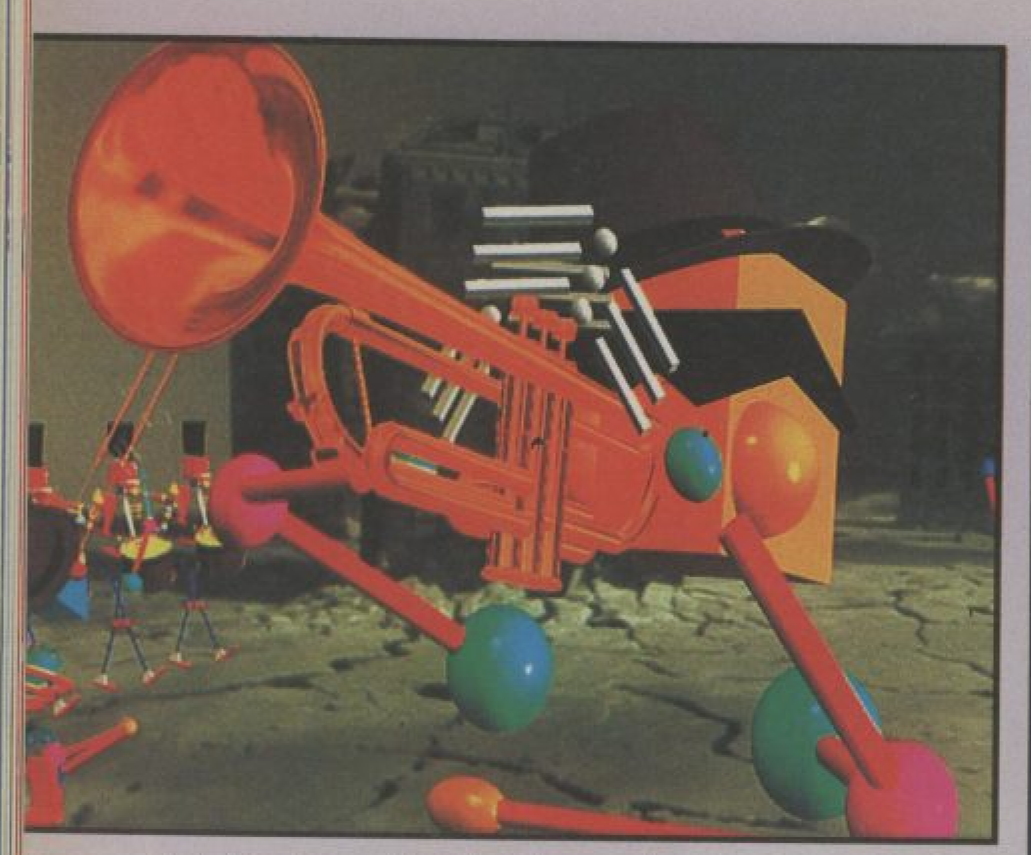
STAGE 1: **PRE-PRODUCTION**
Design a storyboard. This is a script of everything that is to happen within the sequence.

STAGE 2: **MODELLING**
Create wireframe images of the graphics that are to be used within the animation sequence.

STAGE 3: **ANIMATION**
Setup the camera positions from which the animation will be viewed. Define key frames within the animation and get the computer to insert the inbetween frames.

STAGE 4: **COLOUR AND LIGHTING**
Add colour to the wireframe images. Select the light source and light type.

STAGE 5: **THE PRODUCTION RUN**
When everybody is satisfied with the sequence it's time to transfer it from computer data onto film. This may mean producing mattes so that the computer graphics can be incorporated within traditionally shot film footage.



down the steps, rather than draw each individual frame of animation which would take a prohibitive amount of time, only key frames within the sequence were actually drawn. The software was then used to generate a smooth animation between the frames. Needless to say a lot of key frames are still needed to produce animation of the standard produced by Digital Pictures. Once the computer has generated these inbetween frames it is possible to pull and change parts of the animation sequence to make sure everything is just right. Throughout the process you can view the whole sequence from any angle.

From computer to film

The final stage before the sequence is transferred to film sees colour being added to the wireframe graphics. The software allows you to colour the image so that it has a textured appearance. This is done by drawing the texture as a two dimensional image and then 'wrapping' it onto the wireframe graphic. Images can also be made to appear transparent and the software can simulate a variety of lighting effects. Digital Pictures also have access to various production facilities — film and video editing suites and a Quantel Paintbox — so they can take care of most aspects of production, too.

The amount of time it takes to complete a sequence can vary enormously. A TV title may take a couple of weeks. But a TV commercial where a lot of effort goes into getting it just right may take anything from a couple of weeks to several months.

What the future holds

Digital Pictures use an inter-linked system of Silicon Graphics' 4-D Series graphic workstations. These run at an amazing 20 MIPS (millions instructions per second) and cost in the region of £30,000 for a basic model. As the whole process involves complex use of computers you would think that all of Digital Pictures' employees would have a strong background in computing.

Peter Florence: 'There's a mixture of backgrounds within the company. All the animators have a background in art and design. The sort of people who we look for to work on the graphic design side of things are familiar with traditional art techniques and can visualise in 3-D. As the software and computers are becomming more and more sophisticated, programming skills are becoming less important and more artistic skills are needed to make an animation sequence work. However, all the development team have backgrounds in computer science. If a client wants a particular effect which the software doesn't already cover, the animation team and development team get together to figure out how to generate that effect.

'There is a big demand for computer animation but in the past it's been impossible to do long sequences — however, things are now advancing very quickly. You're going to be seeing a lot more computer animation as it becomes more feasible to construct more complex and longer sequences. The computers are getting a lot faster and cheaper and the software is allowing you to do more complex effects — this is being reflected right across the whole range of computers. The design of graphics and graphics packages are improving to the point where you can produce some interesting results on a home computer. You can do some fantastic animation on the Amiga.

'Hand animation is not going to disappear. There will always be a market for hand animation but you can do things with computers which just aren't possible within any other medium. You get a totally different feel. There are things that have been done on a computer where you can't tell what is computer generated from what was real and this is becoming increasingly more so. But that doesn't mean that that's the only direction computer graphics will be progressing in.'

Matte to the future

Traditionally special effects — like animation — are added to the original film footage by a process called matting. Mattes allow two or more separately photographed scenes to be combined into one picture so that the actors appear to be in the same scene as an animated sequence. This is done by first shooting the actors against a specially lighted sodium screen. This particular sodium colour is used because it occupies a very narrow band within the colour spectrum. A beam-splitting camera separates the sodium colour from the rest of the film footage using a prism. The film footage is recorded on colour film while the sodium screen colour is reflected within the prism and is recorded on a separate black and white film strip as a negative silhouette image. From this a positive matte is made which looks like a black silhouette of the actors' movements.

Black and white blow-ups are made of the individual frames so that the hand animators can fit their animations around the actors' movements. The animation is then shot onto celluloid and black silhouettes are made of each of the frames. The silhouette images act as masks so that when all the separate components are reshot together you don't get a double exposure effect with the background clearly visible through the characters. Using computer animation cuts down on the time taken to produce the composite image because the computers can automatically generate the mattes.



Robin Candy's PLAYING TIPS

Now that the dark nights are upon us and you need two extra hot water bottles to defrost your feet in the morning, you can bet that you're going to catch a cold from someone or other. I always find that Buttercup Syrup helps alleviate some of the symptoms. But no matter how bad the snivels get, don't take more than the recommended dosage in a desperate bid to cure yourself. You'll just end up with a headache which even three Neurofen and a Lemsip can't cure — not to mention the dizzy spells.

Anyway enough of the medical advice what about the tips? Office favourites this month include Die Hard, Operation Thunderbolt, Ghouls 'N' Ghosts and It Came From The Desert, so get sending those tips in.

Space Quest

(All formats)



A Cato from Newcastle-upon-Tyne **is the winner of this month's Star Tips for his solutions to numerous Sierra games. I've printed help on Space Quest II this issue, but more of the rest next month.**

Look at watch and press all the buttons. Walk to the hatch. Get a uniform, open the locker and get everything. Walk out of the door. Get on the lift and enter the shuttle car. Walk into the ship.

On Labion, search the dead man and take his keycard, then press the button in the hovership. Look at the trap. Walk north behind the trees and walk east and free the little creature. Walk west and get a spore. Walk north and save the game to be safe. Walk carefully through the root maze and under the large arch. Get the berries from the bushes and then walk back to the spores.

Make your way to the machine on the ledge and post the application form. Get the whistle from the tray and walk east until you reach the swamp.

Rub the berries on your body. Walk to the top of the screen and go east. When you reach the deep water take a deep breath. Now swim through the caverns and enter the grotto. Get the gem. Swim back through the caverns and continue east. Climb the tree and then walk east again.

Go into the cage and talk to the hunter until he stands up. Step well back in the cage and throw the spore. Once the hunter is paralysed, get the keys and unlock the door. Now get the rope from the rock and walk the north. Go west back to the tree that you climbed then get on the log and tie the rope to it.

Swing the rope and jump onto the ledge. Now walk west through the cave. Stand in a dark part of the cave and use the gem. Walk west.

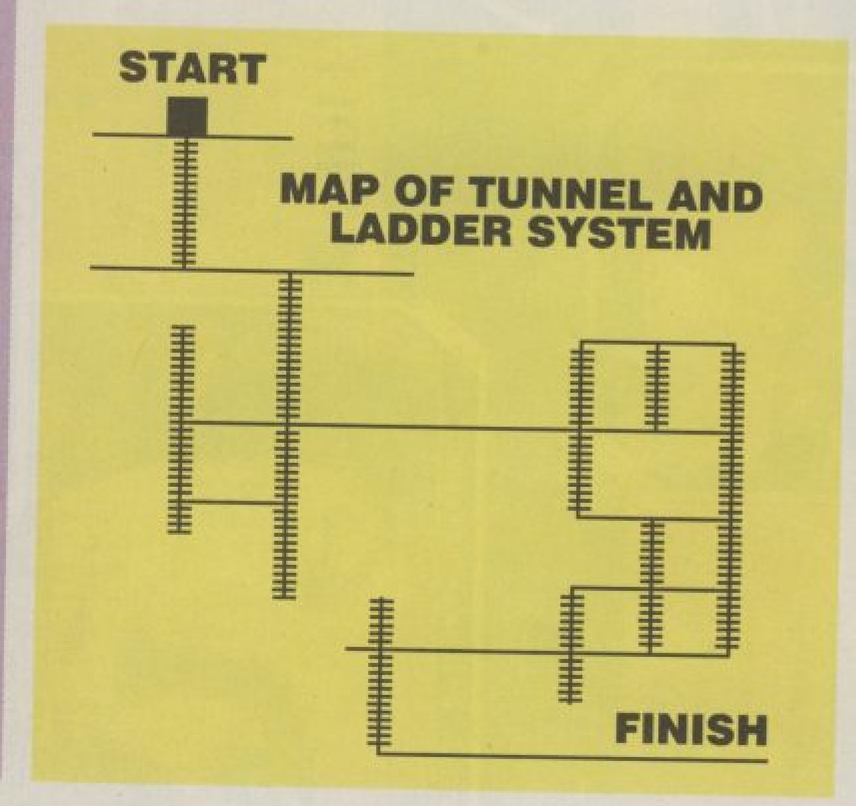
After you fall, pick up the gem and follow the little creatures. Type 'The Word' and enter the hole. Put the gem in your mouth and find your way out of the tunnels (see map). When you've found the exit, enter the water and swim east. On the next screen take the righthand tunnel.

Once outside walk east. Stop walking when you enter the next screen and blow the whistle. When the beast comes out run west and then back again. Walk through the hole in the rock and get a stone.

Hide behind the bush and wait until the guard is facing you. Throw the rock at the guard. Use your keycard and enter the elevator. Go into the ship and type 'Press Power', 'Press Thruster Button' then 'Set Dial To VAC'. Now pull on the stick. When maximum height is achieved type 'Set Dial To HAC'.

When inside the asteroid, walk east and enter the elevator. Press button five. Walk east until you see a door with a button on it. Go inside and collect the clothes, lighter and basket. Go back the way you came and go to level four.

Get the cutter from the janitor's room and get the paper from the toilets. Get the plunger from the janitor's room on level



three. Go back to the ship and walk south. Walk east and a barrier will come down then walk west and another barrier will appear. When the floor starts to move wait until it is close to you then stick the plunger to the barrier. Let go when the floor moves away.

Put the paper in the basket then put the basket on the floor. Light the paper. Walk as far as you can east and a door will open. Go up the stairs to Vohaul and you will be shrunk and put in a bottle. Use the cutter and then climb the vent on the left. Press the life support button and go back through the vent.

Walk west and pull the switch. Type `Enlarge'. Walk back to the bottle. Once back to normal size search Vohaul and you will find a password. Look at the monitor and type in the password. Now walk east up the stairs (it is best to use the mouse here). Once in the tunnel, open the box and get the mask. Wear it. Keep walking until you reach a corridor. Walk west and type in `Press Button' but don't hit return yet. Walk to the nearest pod door where the robot is then hit return. When the robot comes after you run east. When it has gone return to the pod and type `Get In Pod' but don't hit return yet. Stand in the centre of the open door and then press return. When in the pod press the button.

When the pod is in space type `Look' then walk over to the chamber, open it and get inside.



Ghostbusters

(Sega)

The Batman(?), London.

To begin the game with $1,975,800 in the bank enter AA when asked for your initials then enter the following code: # 1173468723.

Football Frenzy

(Amstrad CPC)

I haven't ever heard of this one before but we get so few tips for the Amstrad that I'd thought I'd print this one just to encourage other Amstrad owners to send in tips. Thanks to B Bloom from London for the following information.

Search desk, get book, search desk, get statement, read statement, examine bills, pay electric bill, pay printer's bill, pay water bill, pay man bill, pay all bills, pay all but man, call secretary, give her book, read calendar, look, read index, examine couch, lie on couch, search self, examine watch, search, N, get letters, S, examine letters, look, look, get kit, W, S, S, W, W, S, W, examine post box, post letters, E, N, N, E, N, N, N, say up front, E, get soup, drop kit in bath, wash kit, scrub kit with soap, drop soap, get kit, W, hang kit on heater, S, E, sleep, W, E, ring fire brigade, W, N, speak to chief, look, examine ashes, S, E, speak to secretary, answer phone, N, get yellow pages, S, read yellow pages, read under coach firms, read coach firm, ring another coach firm, read calendar, W, S, W, speak to press, examine press, answer questions, say no, E, S, W, enter pub, buy a drink, buy beer, get beer, drink beer, W, examine man, buy tickets, speak to man, sell watch, E, leave bar, E, E, E, enter bank, ask for manager, sit, ask for loan, leave bank, N, W, N, N, E, N, S, look, get money, W, S, S, W, W, S, S, enter smuggs, buy new kit, leave shop, N, N, N, N, E, N, N, E, W, W, W, E, E, S, S, S, S, S, NE, examine mason, speak to rory, answer phone, read calendar, W, S, S, W, W, S, W, enter station, speak to sergeant, hit mason, push rory in bath, W, S, E, W, S, S, S, S, S, NE, play football with kids, SW, N, N, N, N, N, E, W, S, S, E, E, enter studios, speak to engineer, sing, N, W, N, N, E, offer wilf a sandwich, look, examine driver, speak to driver, W, N, have a whip round, S, E, speak to driver, pay driver, read calendar, W, S, S, E, N, enter coach, start journey, sing, search coach, climb out, wave, look, watch game.

Bloodwych

(All formats)

M Tang

1) When recruiting try to get two warriors and two wizards.

2) Never attack other champions as this is a waste of time and food since they won't attack you. Instead follow the widely known tip of recruit, rob and dismiss.

3) Food is essential later on in the game. So conserve food by eating as little as possible. Try to keep your food level at less than half full.

4) Any monsters that you can communicate with will either help or trade with you. Warriors are generally better at communicating than wizards. Never try to communicate with a group of monsters, monsters with more then two legs, monsters with no legs or girls.

5) Rather than buying cheap spells try saving up for the more expensive ones which are essential on the later levels.

6) When you open the first door of the serpent level you will find that the second door is locked. None of your keys will open the door but make a note of the three green pads. Move over all three and then leave a champion on one of the pads and sit on the second pad yourself. Now click on the door and it should open.

7) Here's list of useful spells. Green: paralyse, good for the price; compass, one you'll definitely need; warpower, gives you the strength of ten; formwall, builds a wall for you. Yellow: antimage, alchemy and spelltap, useful against heavy magic users; summon, calls up a monster to fight for you; vivify, kills your enemies; disrupt, another spell to kill your enemies. Red: fireballs, firepath and blaze. Blue; conceal and vanish.

8) Certain spells, like summon and firepath, can't be used directly at the enemy — they have to be laid as traps. Never face the monsters you summon as they'll attack you given half a chance.

9) When you find the stairs leading down from the maze you'll automatically be turned back on the sixth and seventh step. So when you get there turn around to face the opposite direction.



Times Of Lore

(All formats)

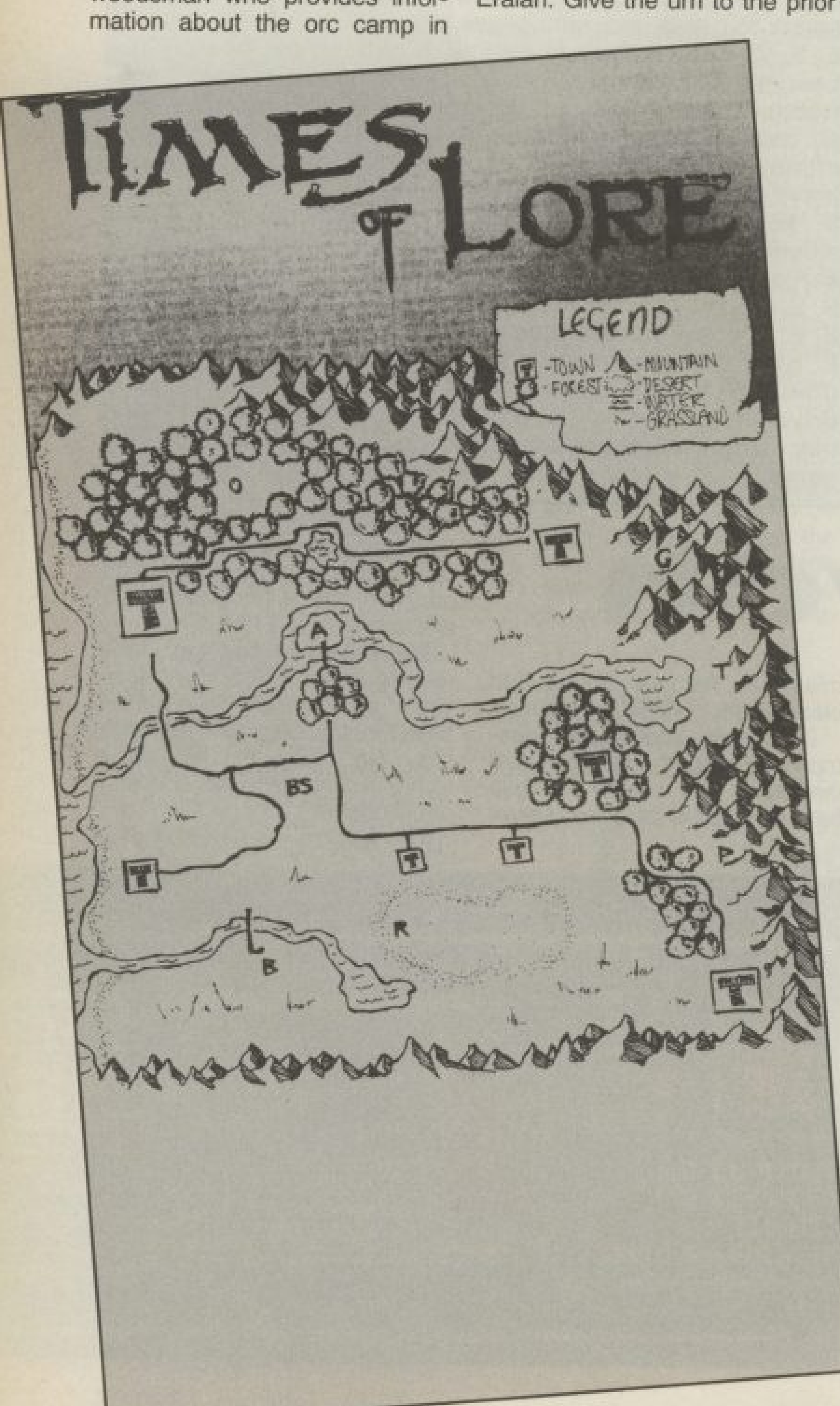
north along a winding trail through the woods, above the pool at the side of this forest road.

Special thanks to Nick Meckenzie from New Zealand **for the solution and map.**

You begin the game in the capital city of Eralan. Go down the stairs and into the small room where the light blue hooded man (the serf) is sitting at the bar, he has some vital information to reveal. Also have a chat with the cleric and accept the quest he gives you.

Leave the inn and go north along the road till you meet the woodsman who provides information about the orc camp in the area. Go to the woodsman's house and take the dagger. Follow the woodsman's directions to get to the Orc Camp (go north along the road to a pond and the Orc Camp is just north of the pond along through the woods).

At the camp, kill the grey Orc and pick up the urn he so kindly drops (the urn is a purple object which is quite hard to see). Now follow the path back through the forest to the road and go back to Eralan. Give the urn to the prior and he will pay you and tell you to see the Regent.



Go inside the main building with the guards outside and talk with the green man on the chair. Accept the mission and then follow the road south to Lankwell. In one of the houses you will find a serf who will sell you the magical axe for 95 gold pieces. Go south and across the old stone bridge. There, by his house, you should find the Black Asp. Ask about the High King and he will give you his confession on a scroll.

Go east till you come to the city of Ganestor. Stay at the inn and go down stairs in the morning. A trapdoor is set and is activated by running into the switch on the wall. Do this and go down the stairs. This takes you into the prison. Find the next flight of stairs and go up them into the dungeons. Go up and left (avoiding the guards) and up the stairs.

There, sitting on the chair, will be Heidric. Give him the scroll with the confession on it and then go back down the stairs. Find the Tablet of Truth on the floor in one of the rooms, then have a chat to the red guards about spying. One will become violent and try to kill you. Kill him and pick up the note he leaves behind. Give the note to Heidric.

To rescue the prince go north from the city and find the building in the mountains. Get the green scroll from the table inside and go upstairs. Kill the guard downstairs and he will drop a key. Collect this and unlock the room upstairs. You can now rescue the prince. He will tell you to go to the Archmage who is to be found to the north of the enchanted forest across the bridge.

The Archmage will tell you to go to the ruins in the desert. First of all teleport to Rhyder, kill the cleric and get the holy water. Travel to the ruins and hit the blue stones. Now go through doors in the correct numeric order.

When you get to the Lyche (a red humanoid sitting in a chair) hit him once with your sword and then use the Holy Water. Pick up the red potion and get out. It's a good idea to stay at Hampton and replenish your energy and supplies.

Go to the Archmage and he will give you the key to the blasted spot. Go the blasted spot, make your way through the maze and pick up the chime. Find your way out and go to the Temple of Angar in the mountains.

Go up the stairs and kill the Blue Monk. Pick up the white key. Go downstairs and enter the room which contains the White Monk. Kill him and go through the trapdoor down to the dungeons.

Use the white key on the locked door and rescue the prisoner. Now return to the room where you killed the Blue Monk and stand by the bed. Pick up the sphere and go downstairs again. Now find the room with the Grey Abbot. Hit him once with your sword and then use the sphere. Pick up the medallion and sit back and wait for the ending sequence.

General Tips

1) Select the Knight at the beginning of the game because he lasts longer in a fight than

any of the other characters.

2) If the guard in the prison offers no response or doesn't know anything about spying then wait for nightfall and he will start to run around. Now ask him about spying and he will then try to kill you.

3) Kill the giant to increase your points then collect the ring that he leaves behind. Give this to the Archmage.

4) Use the green scroll to save time travelling between cities.

5) Use the blue or red scrolls to kill large opponents such as the giant.

6) The red potion makes you travel in the direction you are facing till you hit something or someone.

7) Once you've completed a task go and stay at an inn.

8) Magical boots which make you run fast are available from the serf in Treela. He is usually inside the inn and the boots cost 77 gold pieces.

Vigilante

(Sega)

Russell Rumary, Armthorpe.

On the the title screen push the up-left then press either button. You can now select which stage of the game you wish to play.



Power Drift

(Spectrum)

Andrew Cooke, Llangollen.

1) At the start, change to high gear when your speed reads 120(ish); this prevents anyone coming up from behind.

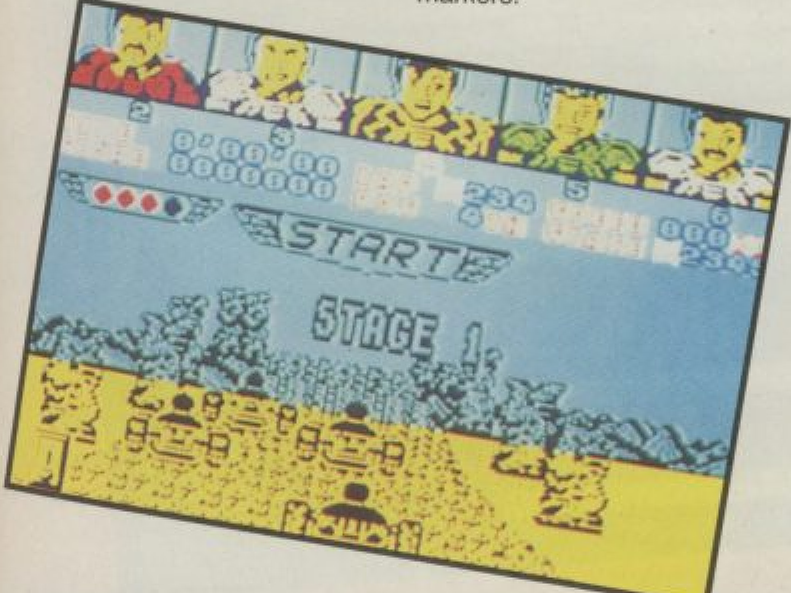
2) If you run into the tyres by the side of uphill roads you bounce to the other side. This can be very useful for passing cars or getting on the inside of a corner.

3) If a corner or sticky situation requires slowing down, don't brake. Use engine (ie, just take your finger off the accelerator whilst cornering.)

4) It doesn't matter which driver you pick.

5) Lapped cars (back markers) appear from lap three onwards. Any cars overtaken prior to lap three will advance your position.

6) If you gain on the car ahead slowly it's ranked higher than you. You zoom past back markers.



Emlyn Hughes
International Soccer

(Spectrum)

Jason Smallwood, Leeds.

1) When first playing get some practice in.

2) After playing a while select practice, use back heels and get used to the kick directions.

3) When fairly advanced, try playing without automatic keeper, have shots at yourself.

4) Gradually move up the levels.

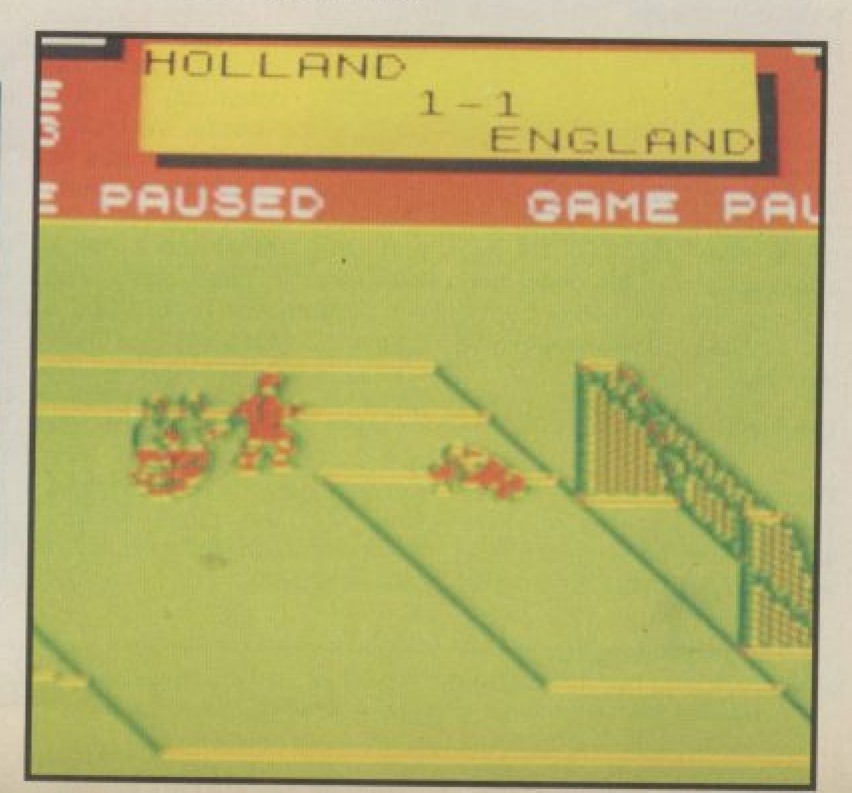
5) If you reach a level you can't cope with, select edit team and make the opposing teams less skillful. Often just lowering their speed will do it.

6) Customising your own teams is great! Postman Pat is a wicked striker.

7) Don't bother with substitutes, unless you like that sort of thing.

8) Choosing players manually is much better than getting frustrated with the computer picking the wrong player.

9) On penalties try to angle the ball slightly with a lot of power, or if only one kick direction has been chosen, kick the ball as hard as possible.



£50 WORTH OF SOFTWARE MUST BE WON!

You've spent all your money on Christmas presents for everyone else and you can't afford to buy yourself that game you've been lusting after. Well, short of breaking into your local software shop and stealing the game, you could always make your gaming expertise work for you and send in lots of tips on the games you already own. Each month the sender of the best set of tips, pokes and maps (I'm particularly keen on maps at the moment) will receive £50 of software of their choice and a TGM T-shirt. Send all your helpful hints to: Robin Candy's Playing Tips, TGM, PO BOX 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

Indy — The Graphic Adventure

(All formats)

The solution for this game is a bit big to print in one issue so if you're stuck in the later stages of the game you'll just have to wait another month. But if you're just starting out on your quest for the Holy Grail here's all the help you'll need to complete the first section of the game. Thanks to Raoul Van Haver from Antwerp **for these tips.**

Barnett College

After meeting the professor and changing your clothes, go outside and you will be invited to follow two guys to go and meet Mr Donovan. Once you've met him return to the college.

Travel to Henry's house. Move the bookcase by pushing or pulling it. You will notice a tiny spot on it. Examine this. Pick up the sticky tape. Go into the bedroom and take the picture down from the wall. Return to the college and go into the gym. Talk to the students nicely and you will end up in another room where all your trophies are stored. Between the two windows you will see a storage bin. Search the bin for a jar. Now combine the jar with the sticky tape to make a small key. On your left you will notice a pile of papers on your desk. Search through your letters until you find a package. The Grail Diary is inside the package.

Go over to the window by the hot water heater, open it and leave the college. Go back to Henry's house, pick up the plant pot and the table cloth. Use the key on the chest. Examine the chest and pick up the old book. Leave the house and travel to Venice.

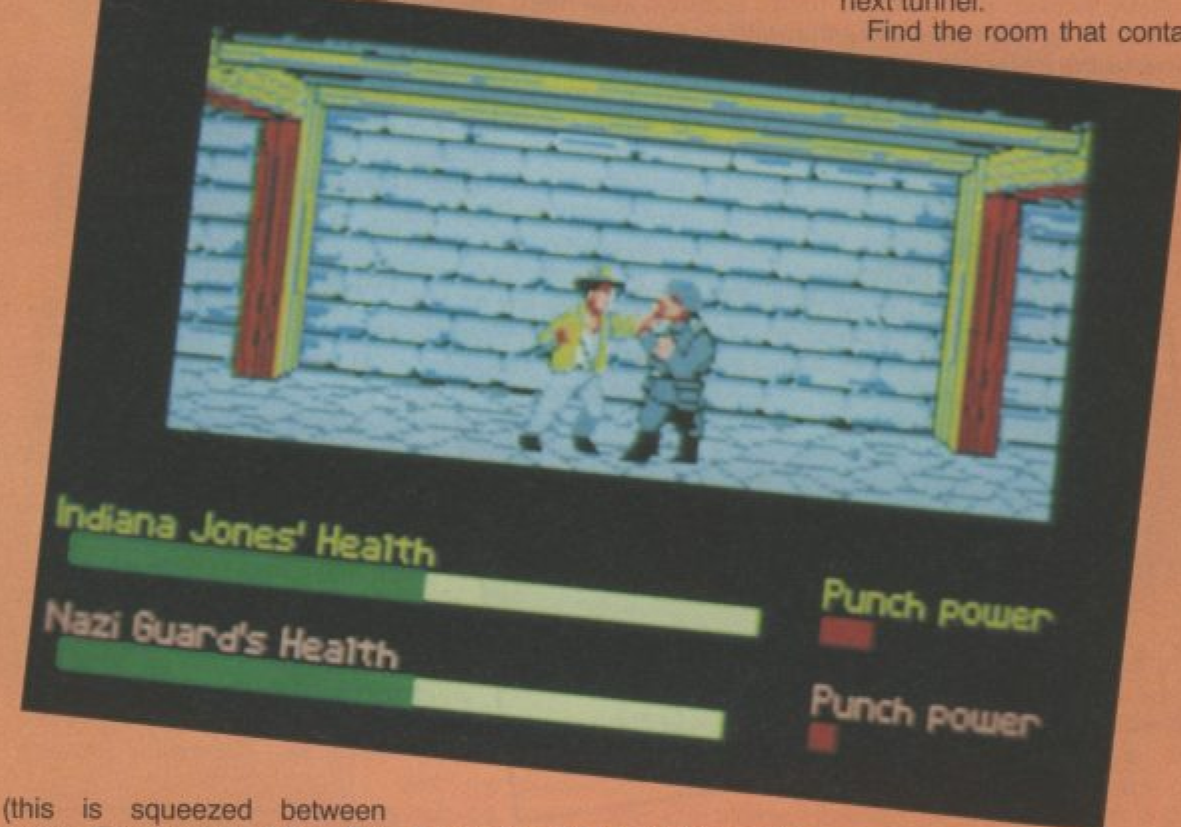
Venice

When Dr Schneider leaves you, go back to the pub and walk to the back where you will find a young couple. Examine the wine bottle. The young man will then say something to you. Pick up the bottle and walk to the fountain. Use the wine bottle on the fountain and then go to the library. Walking in from the plaza, go to the second row of books. The books you need are as follows: Mein Kampf (this is the red book which is not standing up straight), How To Fly A Biplane (this is hidden amongst some grey books) and The Book Of Maps (this is squeezed between some fat books). Use the What is? command to help you find the books. When the response 'books' changes to 'book' you know you've found one. Also, collect the red cord and the metal post. Now examine the Grail Diary. You will be shown a picture and a cryptic message (these change each time you load the game).

Study the picture of the glass window carefully and make a note of the message. Now find the glass window which matches the one in the picture exactly — now save the game. Using the metal post, hit one of the slabs with the Roman numerals on it. Climb into the hole. If you can't see any tunnels then you picked the wrong slab. However, don't worry. Climb back out of the hole. You will now be kicked out of the library. Go back to the same room and hit another slab. You only get three chances at finding the correct slab before being shot (this is where you may need to reload that saved game). Once you have found the underground network of tunnels go down one of them. Take the hook from the arm of one of the skeletons then go and find a torch. Use the wine bottle on the torch then pull the torch. From this point find your way to the stone bridge. Cross the bridge and enter the small room. Examine the inscriptions. Go back to the stone bridge and use the hook on the wooden plug. Then use the whip on the hook. Now look around for a room with a ladder. Climb up and return to the room where the plug was. Walk down the right tunnel.

You now have to find two rooms. One with three statues and a wooden door, and one with some machinery. In the machinery room use the red cord on the wheel with the spokes then turn the machinery on. When in the room with the three statues examine the Grail Diary then push the statues so that their positions correspond to those in the Diary. The wooden door will now open. Go downstairs. Cross the bridge and walk into the next tunnel.

Find the room that contains a chest with some skulls on it and a wooden door. Examine the Grail Diary. You will now have to push the skulls to produce the same notes mentioned in the diary. The door will now open. Go through the door and make your way to the room that contains the coffin. Open the coffin and look inside. You will now be told the location of the Holy Grail. Make your way to the room with the manhole. Climb up the ladder and you've completed the first part of the game.





FREE START-UP

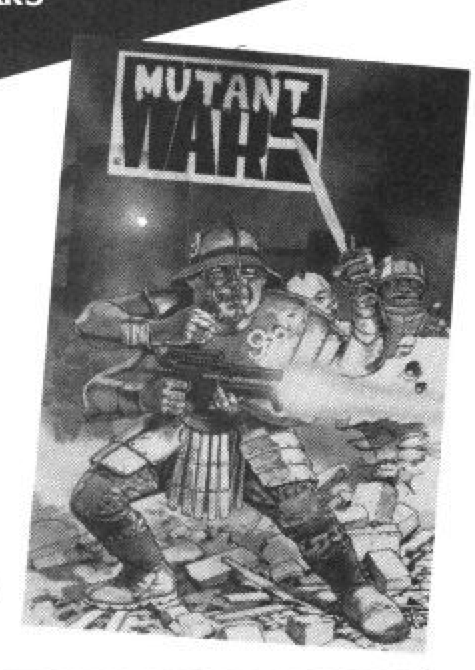
IN MUTANT WARS



THE FREE START-UP IS FOR A LIMITED PERIOD ONLY — SO DON'T DELAY IN WRITING FOR IT! YOU'LL RECEIVE THE FULL SET-UP JUST AS IF YOU'D PAID THE ACTUAL FEE OF £5.00!!!

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Fees: Full colour boxed start-up package + 2 free turns (for UK players): £5.00. Turns 3-10: £2.00 Turns 11-20: £2.50 Turns 21 onwards: £3.00



Playable by mail, computer disc or electronic mail

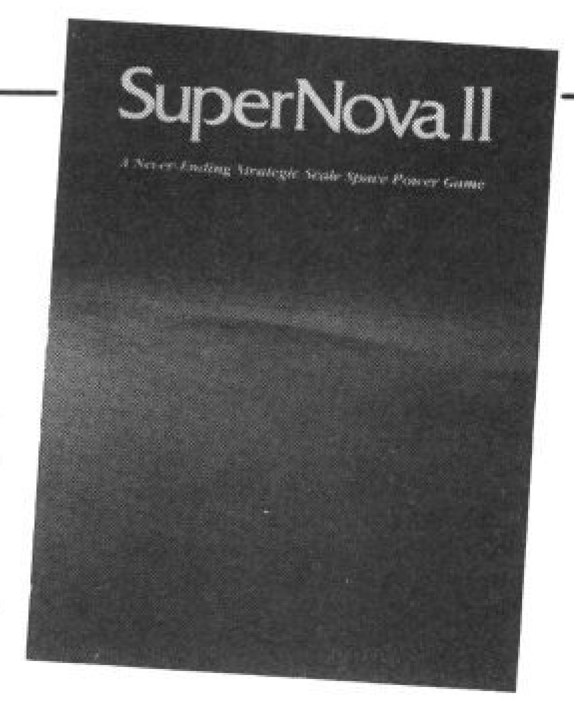
Adventurer Kings

The Play-By-Mail Game of Epic Adventure and Imperial Conquest

• Heroic adventure on a grand scale • Conquest, fulfilment of quests, duels, all set in a medieval fantasy land • Choose to play an Elf, Dwarf, Orc or Human • 15 distinct character abilities which can be freely combined • 15 army types • 25 magic spells • 100 individual characters • 10% of turn fees go into a prize fund which will be shared amongst the holders of high office at the end of the game • Over 60 magic artifacts and 60 technological advances • Kings can lead armies into campaigns of conquest or defence • Adventure in hidden lairs, defended by dangerous monsters • Role-playing interaction between players • No two game worlds alike • Full colour boxed start-up, which includes a 32 page rule book, map and start-up sheet

Fees: Full colour boxed start-up package (which includes 2 free turns)+ starting turn: £6.00 Further turns: £3.00 each, no extras

SuperNova II



Never-Ending Strategic Scale Space Power Game. Voted the best PBM game of 1988 in the U.S.A.

What follows are SOME OF THE FEATURES in the game player designed starships. Game never ends. Multiple galaxies to explore and conquer. Incredibly detailed tactical space and ground combat systems. Details realistic lifeforms. Planetary bombardment. Surface forts. Genocide. Colonization. Industrialization. Trade. Diplomacy. Asteroid mining. Alien Worlds. Empire advancement etc. etc.

Fees: (UK players) Rule Book: £6.00. Full colour boxed set-up: £8.00. Turn Sheet: £4.50. Half Turn Sheet: £2.50. Special price for rule book together with start-up: £12.00.

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Send your (cheque/cash/postal order, no coins please), stating which game you would like to join, to: Dept 8, STANDARD GAMES PBM, Arion House, Station Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8LF., or if you're STILL not convinced send a stamped addressed envelope for more details.

OUR MAN IN Japan

Little's happening in the land of the yen, so this month, TGM's Japanese correspondent looks back at the most exciting decade of Japanese home entertainment and forward to a year that may top the lot. Shintaro's Our Man and Kanaoya's In Japan. Take it away Shinny...

Well, computer entertainment-wise it's been a hell of a decade. The Nintendo came, as did Sega, as did NEC, as did Fujitsu with their sexy FM Towns and as did all those cute little MSXs. But unfortunately, it seems that in Britain they rather came (eventually) and went. We were more sensible and, as a nation, are proud to say that we value the MSX as highly as all the other machines (stop laughing). We are a fairly modest nation but I am proud when I say that we pioneered the MSX. Look, I'm being serious here. Will you stop laughing! You at the back there, shut up!

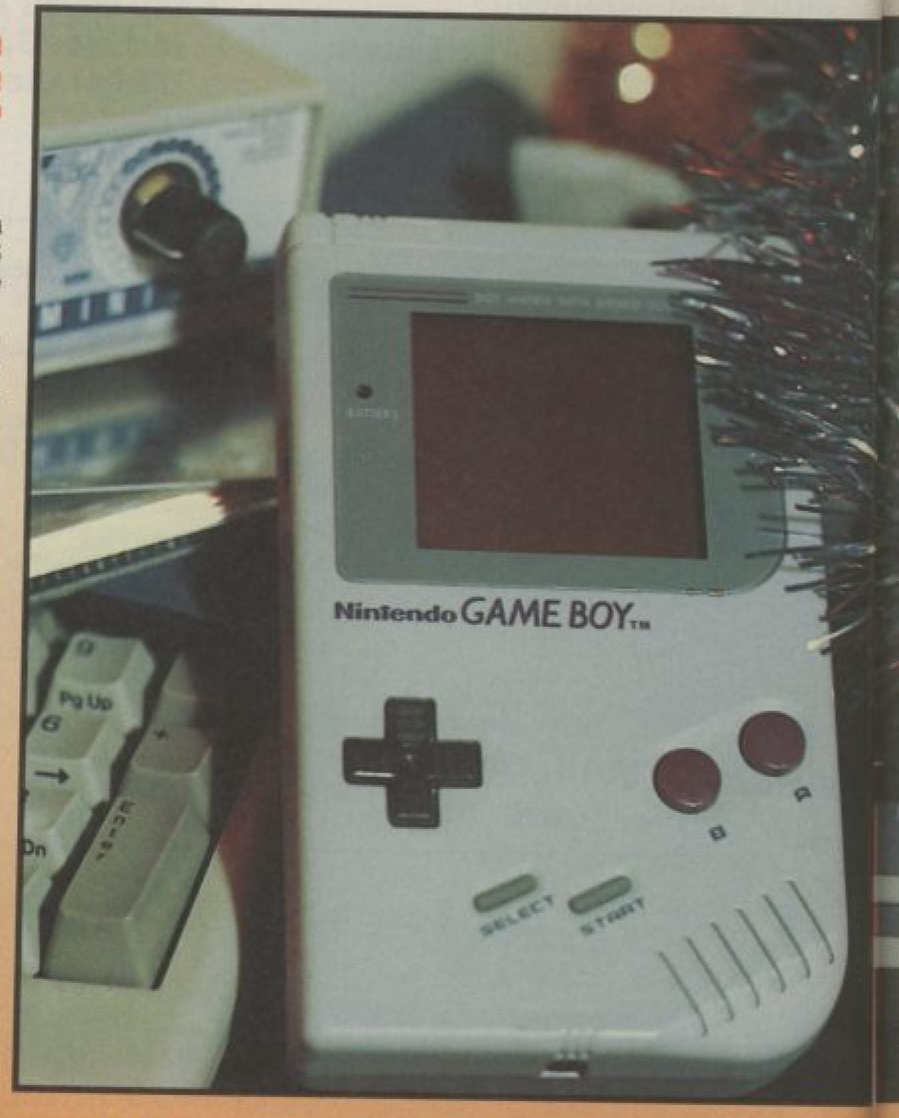
Let's take a look at the Nintendo miracle first. It all started a few years ago by some Japanese person (probably a man — that's not being sexist, it's me despairing for the lack of females in the business) and it took place somewhere in Japan. OK. So my facts are as dodgy as Rushdie seeing next year, but that's probably what happened. It's not particularly important right now though, is it? What's important is that it happened and Nintendo became a household name across the world. The Nintendo Famicom started in Japan, sold squintillions (there are more Nintendos in Japan than video recorders!), went to America, sold squintillions, went over to you lot and sold squid all.

Admittedly, you had your Spectrums and 64s (I played Paradroid for the first time a few days ago — it's incredible) but the Nintendo was always there as a leisure machine, and with the right sort of European marketing it may have sold. Perhaps that was the problem; that you always conned your mums and dads into thinking that computer=learning and therefore didn't actually want a product sold as a GAMES machine (subliminal magazine advert).

What of the eternal runner-up though, the good old Sega. It flopped. You know how just after you've made a jelly it always falls on the floor and despite your hard work and effort that went into making it you can't help laughing at it wobbling around on the floor? That's rather how the Sega was: inferior, wobbly and laughed at. Which is strange considering it had the coin-op company's name on it, and that graphically it was probably superior. Not an Archimedes, but better than the Nintendo.

Anyway, the story with Sega is like the Nintendo story in reverse. Born in Japan, sold like cooked sushi, went to America, sold like Robert Dukakis (remember him?), and then went over to you lot, and sold like lukewarm cakes. Not hot cakes, but lukewarm. (As Obelix said: 'These Britons are crazy.') Probably because it had better games, newer games, Out Run, etc when it came out, compared to Nintendo's pension-collecting titles.

That's Nintendo and Sega done. Then there's the ever-popular PC Engine. I remember this well. I saw some screen shots of Drunken Master and I thought this was the greatest thing I'd ever seen. BIG sprites, small machine, good sound. And while it didn't turn out to be an Amiga-beater, it's still damn good for its price. And thanks to TGM telling the them about it, the UK was hungry for the said product. The UK Engine phenomenon had begun — and it's still going, despite NEC's reluctance to release it your country. I think it's safe to say that the PC Engine has, unlike any other computer/console I'm aware of,



become a cult success in Britain — and deservedly so. Perhaps, now as it's released in the States, some British companies will start to develop on it (we could do with some original games!).

The first widely available CD-ROM came out for the Engine too. And with the new Super Grafx, printer and LCD screen (soon), the Engine is the console that really has potential. I prefer it to the 16-bit Mega Drive but then I'm biased because I've only got an Engine.

I would like to quickly give praise to the Game Boy. It may



not be the greatest thing to look at (however, it sounds great!), but as the old Japanese proverb goes (yes, we have them too, only they're not as obscure as China's): 'Graphics alone do not make a good game'. Take a look at Dragon's Lair, Sword of Sordan, even Shadow of the Beast. Compared with the enjoyment I derived from the graphically-lacking Police Quest, the Sierra game takes it for pure fun and enjoyment (after an infuriating session of Beast it was almost the old karate chop to the joystick). The Game Boy is an excellent machine that is GENUINELY hand-held.

Back to the future (topical, eh?). Looking in my crystal ball, I see the Super Grafx and the Nintendo Super Famicom but those aren't too far off (well, it's not a very big crystal ball!). Obviously, the one to watch out for is the 16-bit Super Famicom. I swear, this one will blow all other consoles away... Engine Exits! Sega Surrenders! Konix Krushed! Being 16-bit it'll be fast. It's got a sound chip that leaves the Amiga and ST way behind. It's got weird graphics systems which programmers will prattle about for years to come. And mostly, it has Nintendo written on it. What does this mean? Pride, good support, efficient staff and a great load of technical support — or so they've led



me to believe. If my Famicom broke down, I'd have it back inside a fortnight. While this may not apply to you Brits — as there isn't really any sort of Nintendo repair factory as I understand — it is an indication of the care and attention they put into each department and how highly they rate us, the customers.

Software for this machine will be stu-bloody-pendous (hopefully). And if nothing elμse, Super Mario Brothers IV will be there, as will Dragonfly, the arcade-type flight sim. Support will doubtless come from all the major cπøompanies again. If the machine actually gets launched next year, it'll be a minor miracle in itself, having been delayed one year already. But all going well, at least I'll see it in summer 1990, and Britain... well it could be any time from now until Thatcher resigns. Let us pray that you don't have to wait too long for either to happen!

It's hard to see what there could be past the 16-bits. NEC have proved (with the Super Grafx) that to get a good machine you don't have to upgrade to expensive chips, so expect changes from them but not, perhaps, so drastically in the CPU area. Nintendo probably aren't looking past the Super Famicom. But if it takes them another six or so years to release another machine, you're looking at the mid to late Nineties (good grief, we're getting old). But where is the gap in the industry right now? As far as I can tell, gamers are satisfied (make that, they should be).

But what about Japanese software in the future? Adventure and strategy games, probably. Although, in Japan, the big thing for the past few years has been, to my surprise, RPGs. Although they're not my favourite genre, there are some that are easily accessible.

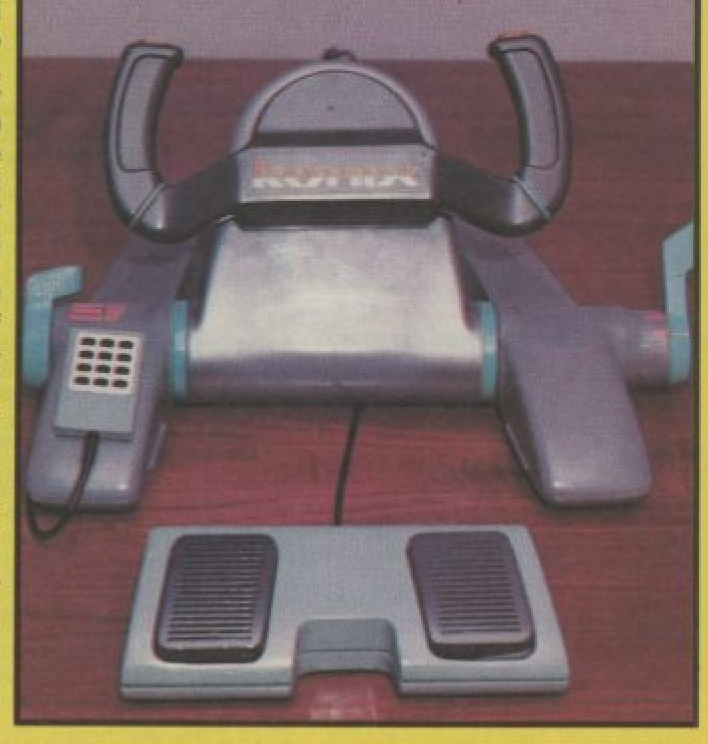
Dungeon Master aside, I played Battletech until I completed it but just couldn't be bothered with what is reckoned over here as the most enjoyable of the lot, the Dragon's Quest series — Dragon's Quest 2 in particular. For those of you that don't know, Dragon's Quest is a major boom in Japan and currently in its fourth incarnation. Why? I think it's the way the games are made. In DQ2 you have an annoyingly cute character, annoyingly cute music and an annoyingly cute game. Battletech, though, is less so. It's an aspect of Japanese games I hate, although most Brits it seems (especially the Ass Ed, Dominic Handy) seem to love the damn things. It's not a serious point, and really it's just a question of taste. But for me, I spend far more time on my Amiga than any other machine.

Don't worry, though. The Japanese scene is fine if you can stand the fake childishness of it all and a lot of games aren't like that anyway: take Motoroader, Wrestling or Tennis even. But I don't see Japanese software dramatically changing (although I wish they'd stop producing the damn baseball games). There'll be variants of variants and some better than others but I wish there were more original ideas like Dungeon Master, Populous and Sentinel. Perhaps the problem does lie with the machines. Amigas are still far more powerful than Engines. Perhaps the weighting will change in the future, with the console viewed as the proper games machine to own.

Gripes aside, the Eighties have been fairly good. The decade where computer leisure finally started to move in every country. But that means, over the next decade programmers and designers will be falling over themselves to do greater things both from a software and hardware point of view. I'll be keeping my eye on Japan and will keep spreading the news to TGM as soon as I can get it. So keep reading these pages, keep asking for my wage rises and, if I may be so bold, keep reading TGM. Until next month, next year, next decade... sayonara.■

THE BRITISH CHALLENGE

Over the past few years, as a Brit there has been little to be proud of. All the (great) consoles seemed things that only Japan could produce — until Konix. It was way back in issue 12 of TGM that we first mentioned news of the British console revolution, but the Welsh company's Multi System is still not on sale in Britain. The Konix Multi System boasts 256K of RAM, continual disk access of a 3.5-inch drive, several screen resolution modes (up to 512x200), clock speed of 12Mhz, 4096 colour palette, CD-quality stereo sound, and prices of £14.99 for software and £199.99 for the console itself. The Konix Multi System also features a large array of peripherals, including a steering yoke and a hydraulic chair!



The machine was originally planned for release in summer of 1989. Software was well into development and the hardware seemed almost there. But the machine has still not seen the light of day and Konix still insist it will be out soon. When, though? TGM found out that Konix probably aren't even producing in large quantities until February. But whether Konix — who, it is rumoured, turned down offers of cash injections from George Lucas and Ocean — will be out for Easter is still unsure. We can but wait and hope.

READER CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED

WANTED SEGA GAMES. Will pay 10 pounds for your unwanted SEGA cartridges, with instructions. (NO CARDS). Phone - 01 871 9398 between 12am to 8pm or write to S.S. Alg, 204 Merton Road, Wandsworth SW18 5SW.

Wanted urgently your PC Engine games, Sega games and Nintendo English, USA and Japanese games. Cash paid. Must be with any instructions and in working order. Alan, 65 Lime Grove, Doddinghurst, Essex CM15 0QX. Tel: (0277) 822 793.

Spectrum strategy games (no arcades), especially Sorderon's Shadow, Stonkers, Apocalypse extension kits and others by Beyond, Red Shift, Lothlorien, CCS, PSS etc. Make offer to Jack Verheydt, 62 Zwanevlot, 7206 CC, Zutphen, Holland.

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Amstrad 464, colour monitor, speech box, light pen, 3 joysticks + £600 of software + many extras. Offers over £400 please. Ring Gareth evenings after 7pm on 01 806 8065.

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Sega Master system , control stick, light phaser, 5 games. Boxed and new. Sell for £60 (inc. postage). Dave McDougall, 20 Buckingham Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 3AD. Tel: (031) 332 4618 (after 6pm).

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Nintendo for sale with advanced joystick. Adaptor to play Japanese games. £450 worth of software including Operation Wolf, Super Mario Bros II, Salamander. Boxed as new. Worth £600, will sell for £275 no. Tel: 01 834 4168.

Commodore 64, C2N, Excelerator+ disk drive, Expert cartridge plus loads of games for just £140 ono. What a bargain! Phone Dave on (01) 555 4542 before you are too late!

PENPALS

Amiga contacts wanted all around the world. Write to Mishal, PO Box 3581, Safat 13036, Kuwait. 101% reply. Hi to my best friend Smart T also Spot.

Amiga contacts wanted. Write to: Tariq Al-Ali, PO Box 66957, 43760 Bayan, Kuwait. 101% reply or call our BBS: 538 9869. Hi to Ahmed, Azhar, Donna, also Mr Farooq.

Amiga contacts wanted all around the world. Write to: Tariq Al-Ali, PO Box 66957, 43760 Bayan, Kuwait. 1000% reply.

Amiga contacts wanted all around the world. Write to: Tariq Al-Ali, PO Box 66957, 43760 Bayan, Kuwait. 10000% reply. Hi to Spot, Mad M and Dr Panga. Also Donna.

Amiga contacts wanted 100% reply guaranteed. Fast and reliable. All welcome. Write to:- Steve, 4 Stopgate Lane, Aintree, Liverpool L9 6AP.

Yo! Amiga users! One hyper cool dude here looking for contacts. 100% reply. Send stuff to Simon Palmer, Greenfields, Garvestone, Norwich, Norfolk NR9 4QR or phone (0362) 850807 evenings. Beginners welcome. Write now!!

Amiga and VHS contacts wanted. Write to Baz (ITV) 2, Guisborough Drive, New York, North Shields NE29 8BT. VHS 100% reply, Amiga 50% reply. No beginners please. Or tel. (091) 2576541.

Amiga quality PD collector seeks other Amiga PD freaks to swap one for one basis. Any memory up to 2meg. Contact Norman Jordan, 63 Fleetwood Road, Norbreck, Blackpool FY5 1SB.

Amiga contacts wanted! 100% reply. Only fast contacts. Write to Jakob Asmundsson, Engihjalli 11, 200 Kopavogi, Iceland. Remember, the earlier you reply the faster you'll get one!

Amiga contacts wanted to swap latest software. Write or phone Mark, 1 Ashmeads Way, Corkhill, Wimborne, Dorset or phone Mark on (0202) 884561.

Atari ST contacts wanted. 100% reply guarantee. Send list to Oriol Buch, Baro de la Barre 12, 08023 Barcelona, Spain. No beginners please.

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READER PAGE

£50 doesn't go a long way nowadays. But as the pockets feel lighter after the obligatory Christmas splurge, you should be grateful for everything you're offered. That's why here at TGM, not only have we spent hundreds of man hours on revamping your favourite monthly, not only has bucket loads of cash been ploughed into the most futuristic monthly around, but the powers that be have also allowed the Star Letter prize to stay at a whopping £50-worth of software. Amazing!

WRITE TO: READERPAGE, TGM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

Arch enemies

Dear TGM
I've recently purchased an A3000 and was very interested to read your comments concerning the machine and its game potential. But I would like the point out that, contrary to what was stated in your article, the A3000 *can* send its sound to the monitor speakers. All new A3000s are supplied with a lead which connects the monitor to the headphone socket, and the built-in speakers can be switched off if desired.

This results in a substantial improvement in sound quality, and if the built-in speakers are left switched on, the sound is emitted from a total of four speakers, resulting in richness that would have Amiga owners turning green with envy. When this lead is fitted the volume can also be adjusted using the monitor controls, which is very useful when playing Interdictor at two in the morning!

The machine obviously has great potential, and I was pleased to see your review of Interdictor in the December issue. I hope that you will be reviewing the versions of Out Run, Afterburner, Dragon's Lair, Hard Drivin' and Karma mentioned by Alex Card in the aforementioned issue, for these are potentially incredible games.

Could you tell me if there is any Public Domain software available for the A3000? Also, is there a good sound sampler (and software) currently available for the Archie? I hope that you will continue the A3000 coverage, as this is obviously the machine of the future.
Andrew Hassall, Farndon CH3 6QP.

You can be assured that The Games Machine will be reviewing all the top Archie games as soon as they appear. However, I'm not too sure that all the products you mention will be coming out on the Archimedes. Certainly Out Run won't be, and Activision have no plans to bring out Afterburner either, but there are plenty more good games that will benefit from the extra speed of the Archie. And it's not just the 'majors' who are coming out with good games. 4th Dimension's E-Type (reviewed this issue) is a great little race game that easily gives Power Drift a run for its money.

Regarding software and hardware support, we are finding new and interesting products for the A3000 every week. PD software is still a bit hard to get hold of, but an excellent sound sampler is available from: Clares Micro Supplies, 98 Middlewich Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7DA. Tel: (0606) 48511. The Armadeus board costs £149.95 and Clares' own software £79.95 (although other software can be bought). Take a look at last issue (p51) for a full review of it.

Games for boys

Dear TGM
Don't you think it's about time a magazine devoted some pages to the Nintendo Game Boy? So it's not officially released in Britain yet, but I'm sure I'm just one of the hundreds that has managed to pick one up in this country.

Come on TGM, get your act together and give this machine some coverage. I'm sure, in a few months, every time we step on a train, our ears will be filled with the sounds of Super Marioland, Tetris, Alleyway, Tenres etc.
Derek Stroicey, Prestwick KA9 2DP

As you can already see from this issue, the old review section is getting a real shake up. More machines are to be covered, with more games reviewed — and this includes the Game Boy. Although, as I'm sure you are well aware, imported stuff is always difficult to get hold of so bare with us till it all gets going smoothly.

Setting the standard

Dear TGM
After downgrading (from an Amiga) to an old IBM XT for reasons of study, I dug up all my TGMs and started looking for available games. After reading through about three, I despaired and buried them again. Most of the reviews didn't mention my Hercules monochrome graphics card, nor memory required (I've only got 512K) nor the required MS-DOS versions (mine is 3.21). Are the following correct?

1) In most of the cases a Hercules card is enough to use the software, except when it's stated otherwise.

2) In all cases 512KB is sufficient for the software. Can you please correct this from now on, or confirm my assumptions, as I'm forced to buy software by post and so can't examine the packaging.

Otherwise nothing but praise for the magazine, especially the adventure section, which is by far the best around today.
Richard Knijnenburg, The Netherlands.

The reasons we don't write what you need to run PC games are simple. Often we don't have the final packaging for games and therefore only know if it works on our machines. Also, most games have the most basic of requirements. Those being a Hercules monitor (which is quite adequate for most games — we know, we've got one) and 512K of memory. But just to make things a bit simpler, how about us mentioning if you need more than the basic requirements. There's nothing like a happy PC owner.

Underneath the Arches

Dear TGM
I absolutely hate that crap piece of computer called the poxy Archimedes. Why do its owners keep writing in saying my Archie's faster than your Amiga. I know why, because they haven't got any bloody games to play. That's why. And everyone knows the main reason for slagging off an Amiga is JEALOUSY. Yup, the truth hurts. I own an Amiga and I love it. Why? Because I don't have to go on an expedition to the outer boundaries of the North Pole to find another user.

So what has the Archimedes got that the Amiga hasn't? Speed. But I don't care, at least my Amiga's got software. Okay, so the Archie's four times faster than my Amiga. My Amiga gets the job done in the end. So to all you rich Archie owners (if anyone owns a blooming Archie cause I've never seen an owner) to whom £350 is a mere trifle sum of money to do something four times faster than mine, I could name a large number of charities who would take

a different view. And if you still want to brag about speed, why not do a benchtest with an expanded A2000 against a top-of-the-range Archie and watch who wins for speed. Ha. Now if this letter hasn't shut your pompous mouths then you are obviously too thick to take notice of an argument I've just won. Anyway, TGM is the best mag in the world. Keep it up.
Mark Hewstone, Leighton Buzzard LU7 7TS.

I knew someone somewhere would start moaning that the Archie's a waste of space. Basically, versions of games on the A3000 are miles better than 16-bit versions. I'm very surprised we haven't been inundated with letters from irate PC owners. It's worth remembering that PC games are often a lot better (and faster) that ST and Amiga versions. A fast, VGA PC compatible with a decent sound board (like the Roland LAPC-1) will take you nearer arcade quality (and beyond) than a basic Amiga or ST ever will. How you can accuse an Archimedes owner of being jealous is beyond me — the Archie's better in all aspects. Software support IS growing. Remember, a year ago people thought of the PC as a stuffy computer for business people. But nowadays, every major game is coming out on the PC — the same will happen to the Archie. Regarding availability, the same could be said or Porsche owners: their spare parts are limited and the machine is also bloody fast!

Reviews overrated

Dear TGM
The reviews section is a big let down compared to the rest of TGM. The presentation is messy, comment boxes look plain and large game awards are clumsily plastered over screen shots. Take a note from Paul Rigby, his section is a delight to the eyes; beautifully laid out, atmospheric comment boxes and a perfect reviewing system. My other gripe is with the reviews. Some games are overrated; ie Batman: The Movie and The Untouchables were both awarded 96%, Onslaught 95%, North and South 92% etc etc. These ratings are totally unrealistic as there will always be games better than those currently on the market. Blood Money and more recently Beach Volley were also overrated, both these games are too damn difficult, most of my friends and some of the more respectable computer press agree. The solution? I think that multiple comments should be used and a more thorough reviewing system should be implemented.

Please print this letter as it would be interesting to see what opinions other readers have on this subject.

So until TGM merges with Acorn User, Make Mine er sorry wrong magazine.
Raheil Mehdi, Middlesbrough TS5 7QH.

Well, we'd all be interested to hear what everyone thinks of the new reviews section. I hope you'll agree it's a lot cleaner and readable, with more information on the games that people are interested in — and with few compromises. Although it may appear that only one person's opinion is expressed in each review, this is definitely not the case. Usually, everyone on TGM, ZZAP!64/AMIGA and CRASH takes a look at all the top games, and with all these minds at work we feel that we rarely get it wrong. As for saying 'there are always going to be better games', please try to remember that despite TGM's all-knowing, all-telling policy we actually have no idea whatsoever of what's definitely going to happen in the future. Therefore, we can't compare present day games with what might come out in the future. And comparing with the past would be pointless as we'd be rating way into the two hundreds by now if we did. If TGM does compare (we try to rate games on their own merits) it is with games that people are currently playing.

Please, also try to remember that we only have a few days to devote to each game. We reviewed over 80 games last issue, and wrote the issue in one month. It's interesting to work out the average length of time to devote to each game (playing and writing about it), then trying to estimate what people will think of it after a month's play.

Out of interest, few people here are still playing Batman (too easy), even fewer the Untouchables and Onslaught. However North and South is almost as popular as Kick Off (both probably underrated). Additionally, Blood Money was soon conquered by most people here, and Beach Volley is a great sports sim but needs time to master (we didn't rate it as highly as some magazines we could mention!).

Finally, it's an old argument, but personal taste still carries more weight than flashy graphics and cool sound ever do. And, in our opinion, few 16-bit games are worth the asking price. Especially when you consider you could buy four albums or two CDs or two videos or go to the cinema every month for a year or even get a TGM subscription for the same price. If you ask us, 8-bit owners should, by all accounts, be laughing their heads off! Life's like that though.

Uncle Mel's TRIVIA QUIZ

1) Which Games Machine celebrated its one hundredth birthday on 25 November 1989?
2) To the nearest penny (or yen), how much has Fujitsu bid to install an 11 million yen supercomputer for the Hiroshima Water department?
3) What have Garfield and William Shakespeare got in common?
4) Which two blondes helped launch the Amiga A1000 in 1985?
5) The ancient Babylonians invented the numeric code zero in 1750BC. When did the zero arrive in Europe?
6) True or false: Manchester University researchers have developed a computerised nose?
7) Give or take ten years, when was the superconductor discovered?
8) What's the difference between the PC-Write wordprocessor at £3.95 and Word-Perfect, costing £425?
9) Name the movies in which the following acted as androids: Woody Allen, Brigitte Helm, Daryl Hannah, Sylvester Stallone.
10) On whom was Gerry Anderson said to have modelled Thunderbirds' Lady Penelope?
11) How big is the hundred dollar, Private Eye, 720x280 pixel screen?
12) Which software houses are masquerading as these lovely ladies: SPONGY SIS, MRS NICE TART, LAX KISS?
13) Who or what played the alien life form running amuck in Dark Star?
14) How will the new Cambridge Computer Z88 upgrade achieve a weight of under four pounds?
15) Name the old fart who is the backing vocalist on the Spectrum Action Pack TV adverts.
16) When was the first computer shop opened in the UK? 17) Name these Superheroes: 'Faster than a speeding bullet', The Caped Crusader, 'Saviour of the universe', 'Ever so naughty'.
18) Name the Games Machine that celebrated its 3,700th birthday this century.
19) When was Nintendo founded, and what was its first Games Machine?

Answers

1) Juke Box.
2) 0.5p or 1 yen.
3) A Winter's Tail/Tale.
4) Debbie Harry (before she became Deborrah), Andy Worhol.
5) 1433AD (thanks to Henry The Navigator). It was only 3,000 years late.
6) True. It stinks.
7) 1911, by Herr Omnes Of Leiden.
8) £421.25, suckers!
9) Sleeper, Metropolis, Bladerunner, you name it.
10) Marianne Faithful (ask yer Dad!).
11) One inch square.
12) Psygnosis, Mastertronic, Klassix.
13) A rubber beach ball.
14) By using an ultra-lightweight magnesium alloy case.
15) Steve Winwood.
16) 31 July 1979 (Microdigital, Liverpool).
17) Superman, Batman, Flash Gordon, Sooty.
18) Dice.
20) 1890, Playing Cards.



Don't weave me

If Indiana Jones — The Graphic Adventure didn't get you playing adventures then Lucasfilm's latest sure will. Marshal M Rosenthal trekked across America to George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch in search of the story behind the making of Loom...

It was the time of the Great Guilds; when the Shepherds, Glassmakers and their like coexisted in complete harmony — content with what they had. Only the Weavers found the world unfavourable, unworthy of their craft. So the Weavers left it, to live in solitude on a mist-covered island. Here they transcended from just weavers of cloth into weavers of the Pattern, the fabric of reality itself. The Weavers continued for many years on their self-imposed island of exile — known on old, tattered maps as Loom.

But all was not well. Years had passed on wisdom and knowledge but not good fortune. The Elders noted that lack of contact with the outside had caused inbreeding monstrosities — with fewer children born each year. Still, so long as they could continue to maintain their mastery over the populace, they did not care. Only Lady Cygna defied tradition. What she did was masterful — and monstrous. What she did begins your adventure, as you take on the persona of young Bobbin and attempt to fulfil a destiny shrouded in mystery.

It's early in the Californian day as I drive down a dusty trail and past the picket fences bordering on both sides. Others might be content with just doing a game review of Loom, but TGM prefers to go right to the source: Lucasfilm game designer, Brian Moriarty. A trail leads off the beaten track to a ranch not signposted for the public. Moriarty waits by a white Victorian house, his hair blowing wildly in the whistling wind. In true Sherlock Holmes style I look up (Professor) Moriarty's history. I discover he was previously at Infocom, where he created Wishbringer and many others, before moving to the slick operation of Lucasfilm. But why leave the then-text-only giants to come to this deserted wasteland?

'It's not just to satisfy the desire of gamers for visual images,' he remarks as we take in the view, 'but if you could take a look around Skywalker Ranch, you'd know what I mean about wanting to be here.' Moriarty is referring to the 3000+ acres around us which is home base for a number of George Lucas' companies — the gaming division being one of them. Designed to mimic a stately homestead, games are created in what appears from the outside to be the horses' stables.

But what about the environment of Loom? How does it compare to your previous adventure, Indiana Jones? 'Loom doesn't have quite as many rooms as Indy does (there's 60+),' he says, 'partly because the graphic quality of the art is so powerful — very expensive in terms of disk space.'

Moriarty continues as we stroll towards his office. 'Comparisons with our Indiana Jones game keep cropping up. There are similarities, but my program also uses capabilities built into the interface which Indy doesn't exploit. The biggest departure is that there are no menus with text and verbs — everything is done using pictures and icons.'

No text, no verbs? Sounds scary and sure to frighten off the novice player, but strangely enough, just the opposite is true. We enter his office and Brian boots up the program for a look at this unusual interface which hugs the bottom third of the screen. First there's a picture of Bobbin's staff. 'There's a whole sequence at the beginning devoted to him and the staff,' comments Moriarty. 'It's an example of what we call 'special case animation', coding devoted just for this scene alone... It's a deadly extravagance but great,' he smiles.

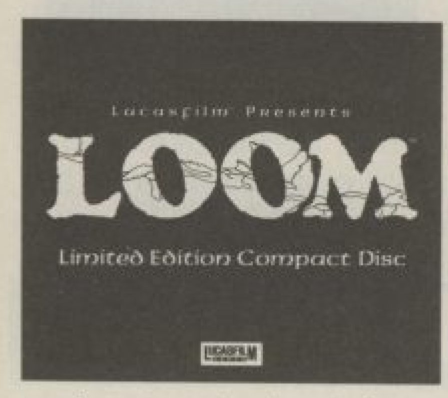
Magical Music

Below the staff is a musical stave, displaying one octave of notes — this is used to issue magic. 'Here's how it works,' says Moriarty. 'You pick what you want your magic to affect, then perform a sequence of four musical notes which can be done by touching either the wooden staff or the notes themselves. As you can see, the staff will twinkle and glow when magic happens, a very nice effect. This involves you in the game — working magic becomes part of the learning process as correct sequences of notes must be written down in your spell book for future use.

'I've always been bothered by graphic games in general because the interface stopped what was happening. You always had to leave the game to use the control panel, it interfered with the flow and kept you from identifying with the character you represented.

'What I've done here,' continues Moriarty, 'is create an interface that is part of the action — it continues the process of acting out the fantasy. You have to learn and perform magic to make things happen. This helps you identify with Bobbin. Remember that there are no instructions as to what to do. You have to participate to think — especially as

this way



you have to write down information in your spell book to avoid getting hopelessly lost.'

Loom has three difficulty levels to master. The simplest level adds a box beneath the musical staff which records the sequence of notes just performed; it's a visual aid in remembering what you have just done (this sequence can also be repeated by touching the box). The second level eliminates this box. 'Playing and winning at the third and highest level doesn't come easy,' he challenges. 'There are no letters or musical notes at all. Everything must be accomplished by memory and feeling for musical tones.'

Moriarty points out that a victory on each level brings a special reward. 'The prize at the end for one successful completion at the highest level is spectacular,' entices Brian.

Cinematic Effects

Continuing the exploration of the physical world of Loom, it's exciting to see numerous cinematic effects, similar to Indy. The game takes control away from the player when characters speak with one another. Also similar is the high level of animation of the characters. And just as Indy posed many questions for Moriarty (like should Indy always fight always on one side?), Brian wonders aloud if implementing a stage where the player can take control of another character besides Bobbin should occur. There are many characters, both male and female, but Bobbin can't cause any violence as it is, after all, not a slash and hack game. 'But that doesn't mean bad things can't happen,' Moriarty cautions. 'There's strange things going on — which can be much more terrifying than the ordinary violence of man with weapon.'

Moriarty slyly admits that there are secret 'Easter eggs' lying about. All he will say is that magic may cause some interesting things, just for the player's amusement. 'Sounds a bit like a throw back to my Infocom days, doesn't it?' chuckles this clean-shaven epitome of an all-American guy.

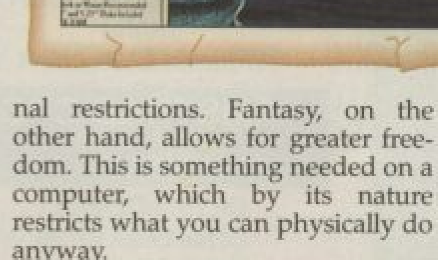
There is much about Loom that can boast of being spectacular. The music was scored especially for the game, with a Dolby cassette included in the package (there's also a CD version!). The cassette creates the atmosphere and sets up the storyline. As Moriarty notes: 'This not only saves disk space for playing the fantasy, but sets the mood in a way that uses the player's imagination. No rinky-dink set up here, either — the tape uses professional actors and is a class act all the way through.'

Creating the fantasy

In all the glitter and fireworks of the technical, it's important to understand WHY Moriarty chose to create the kind of world he did. 'Fantasy is easier to become a part of,' he points out. 'Science fiction requires hard facts which can get too involved, it has too many internal restrictions. Fantasy, on the other hand, allows for greater freedom. This is something needed on a computer, which by its nature restricts what you can physically do anyway.

'An example of this is when a character picks something up. Normally in games, that just means it disappears and is in his inventory. Loom doesn't let you pick anything up. Everything is done with magic. So the few examples of moving an object with a character (acquiring the staff as already mentioned) are done in extremely fine detail and realism which can't possibly be used throughout a game with computer systems as they are now.'



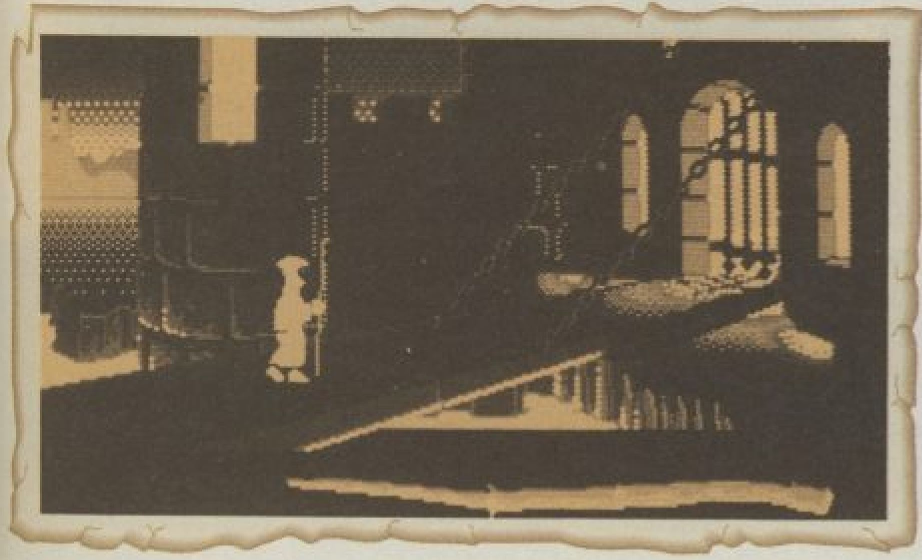


Moriarty sums it up with a few words of advice. 'First, know that a hard drive is very, very helpful. Loom runs nicely from floppies (we've done some extensive memory compressing techniques), but there's no beating high RPMs — the IBM version alone requires six disks, and I could have used another three or four to add even more. Another thing is that Loom is designed to encourage new gamers, those people intimidated by graphic adventure games. Experienced players might find the interface unique but the newcomer will embrace it as a friend. There's even the makings for a sequel built into the end.'



With so many people getting into adventures, it's good to see the likes of Infocom introducing their range of graphic adventures and Lucasfilm pushing their already-advanced graphic adventures even further. With 32-bit technology on the horizon, it can only bring the likelihood of total user interaction one step closer...

Loom will be released on the PC in January, followed by Amiga and Atari ST in March.



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The ADVENTURE STRATEGY ROLEPLAY Column

ST (also PC, Amiga) £24.99

THE HOUND OF SHADOW

Electronic Arts

You know, one day, Eldritch Software may be hailed as the saviours of the text adventure. With The Hound of Shadow, they have developed the text/graphic adventure to such a high level you have to declare that it heralds the new generation of adventure games.

This Cthulu horror story follows the classic Lovecraft structure of murder, revenge, occult, demons and things which drive you mad when you take one look at them. Things which lurk on the edge of 'reality' waiting to enter, waiting to destroy.

Eldritch do describe the game as an RPG though, which is technically correct as you must choose a large variety of attributes (the most comprehensive and well-implemented attribute system I've ever seen). What is your sex and profession? Your physical, social and investigative skills? Your academic, logical, creative and spiritual skills? Have you had military service? After submitting the attributes you are given a thumbnail sketch of yourself. A more preferable system, say Eldritch, than just displaying rows of figures as most RPGs do. This is fine by me. In fact hiding the stark RPG features may actually attract a wider audience to The Hound of Shadow.

The challenge of the game is described by Eldritch as solving problems as opposed to puzzles. Mainly because the game is heavily weighted towards character interaction, not object manipulation. This is where Hound's one and only fault lies. The parser is not the best I've ever seen, which is why it does not qualify for a Golden Scroll award. However, Eldritch are aware of this problem and will endeavour to correct it for later games.

Hound runs under the Timeline system which will provide the link between it and any sequels Eldritch may produce. Using Timeline your character will be transferred to new scenarios. Any notable deed you may have done in Hound will follow you into the new scenarios. People may recognise you as your reputation may have preceded you. The interesting factor with Timeline, though, is its longterm lastability because none of the scenarios are sequential. It is possible to play the sequel first, go onto the third scenario and then play Hound, for example.

Eldritch have an excellent system on their hands. Their choice of the Cthulu Mythos was very wise — a nice change from the usual fantasy scenario. I have no hesitation in recommending The Hound of Shadow to anyone. It oozes atmosphere and reeks of pure, unadulterated quality.



PC, Amiga, ST £24.99

DRAGONS OF FLAME

SSI/US Gold

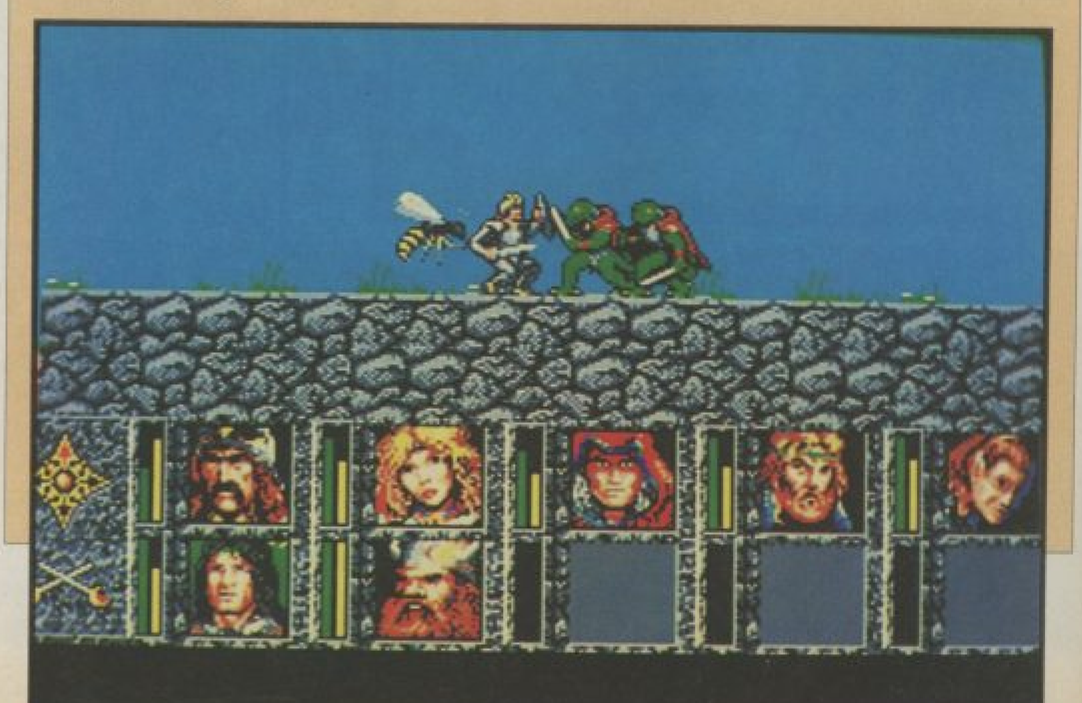
Following on from Heroes of the Lance, SSI have produced Dragons of Flame which improves over Heroes in that you can accommodate ten characters instead of Heroes' eight. This means that any friendly types you may meet on your travels can join your band;'I will protect your flank' was one useful declaration heard by a friendly stranger. In addition, useful objects can be found during the journey which will help your quest.

The plot involves rescuing Laurana, finding the sword Wyrmslayer (there is a strategic map to gauge your progress) and rescuing the slaves held within Pax Tharkas — while dodging a variety of monsters (I don't remember giant wasps in the book, though!).

There are two principle viewpoints in Dragons. The first is the overhead view where a single character represents your party. This gives you the opportunity to see foes approaching from a distance. The second view is the side-on tactical view which you use for close combat and detailed movement. It is the combat area that I object to. The game appears to have your group travelling in single file, which is fine in a narrow corridor but in a wilderness? Consequently, when you are attacked, only the front character can bring arms to bear. Okay, Raistlin can lob a few spells from the back but that's no use when you are facing four or five Draconians at once. There should have been a method where you could position your team to the best effect. This means that one strong enemy can pick off the team one at a time. A bit silly this as you have from eight to ten characters in your team at the time!

Graphics are good in all versions while sound is fair on Amiga/ST. Dragons of Flame is not a bad game, however you already have the odds stacked against you. The strict team formation is an unnecessary additional hardship which is a major flaw in the gameplay.





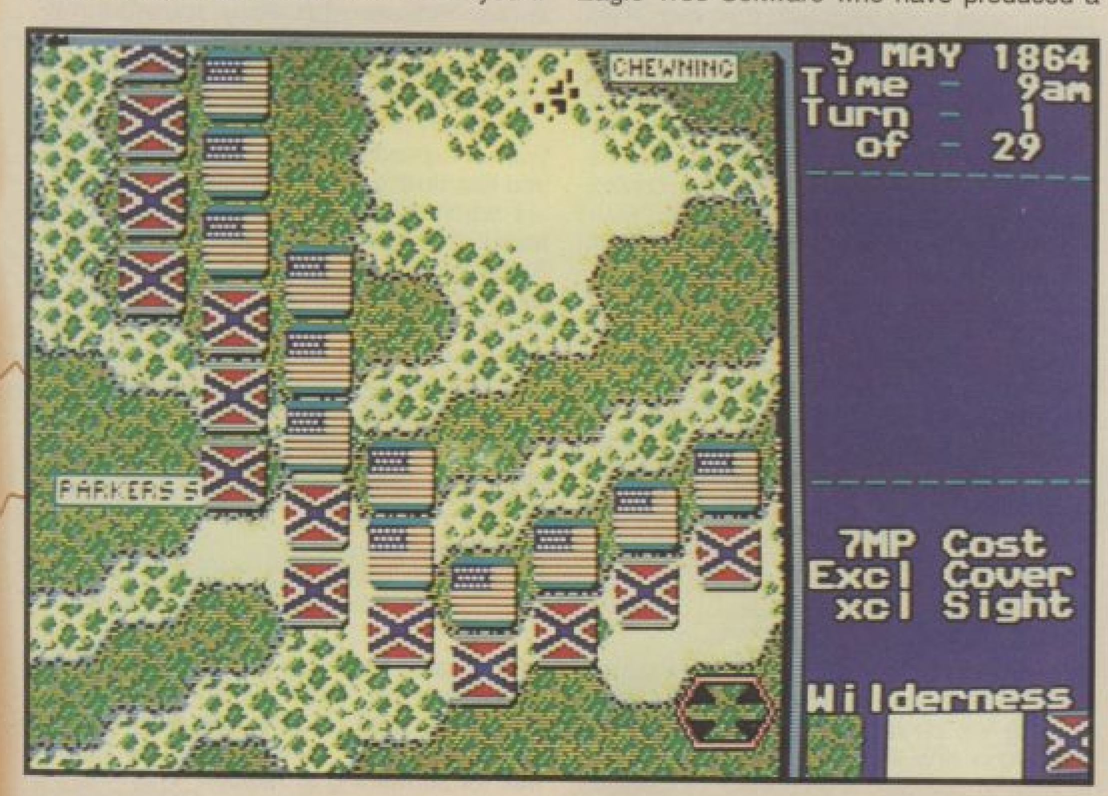
On top of the world

Hope you enjoyed yourself over Christmas! I certainly did. I'm still plump after my festive feast on the column. Roast pigeon, braised pigeon, pigeon a la carte followed by pigeon and custard. I'm looking forward to a new year packed with invention, innovation and a pay rise.

Out with the old and in with the new. Hope you like the new look this month, however, the changes are not just superficial. In an effort to cram in even more reviews, and present more and larger screenshots I have decided to shorten the ratings to an overall score, which will free a bit of space. The other facets of the game will be covered within the body of the review.

Right onto the good stuff. ARC, via Frames development house, have announced the imminent release of Prince. Just before he died, the king pronounced that his followers should fight it out amongst themselves to see who should rise as leader of the Empire. Utilising four levels of magnification, so that commands can be given down to company level, Prince promises a perfect mixture of wargame and arcade elements. Other features include multiple infantry and cavalry classifications, terrain modifiers and scouts. In addition, ARC's very own Boridino has been converted to the Amiga and PC.

Talking of conversions, SSG have converted The American Civil War Volume III to the PC. Amongst the handy additions are a novice level, a status bar which tells you if you are winning or not and a full order of battle report for your army. Needless to say, the graphics are improved.



Well received last month on the Amiga, Keef the Thief has now been released on the PC. Support has been given to the Roland, Ad Lib and Games Blaster sound boards. All have been well used to their relative abilities.

D&H Games have been rather busy lately. Retailing for a mere £2.99 they have announced the following sports strategy games on their Cult label: Boxing Manager (Spectrum, Amstrad, C64); Wembley Greyhounds (Spectrum, Amstrad); International Manager (Spectrum, Amstrad); Two-Player Super League (Spectrum, Amstrad, C64) and Striker (Spectrum).

Anyone who has had trouble getting in touch with that excellent adventure monthly magazine, Adventure Probe, should be aware that the editor, Mandy Rodrigues, has changed address. All correspondence should now be addressed to 67 Lloyd Street, Llandudno, Gwynedd LL30 2BN. Probe (£1.50 per issue) covers adventures on all formats in addition to a variety of hints and tips. Incidentally, Mike Brailsford's Spellbreaker (£1.50 per issue) serves as a perfect complement to Probe as it is heavily biased towards adventure solutions as well as hints and tips on all formats. Contact Mike at 19 Napier Place, South Parks, Glenrothes, Fife KY6 1DX.

I have just finished reading issue five of Chris Hester's Adventure Coder (£1.00 per issue). This rather eccentric magazine is ideal for all you adventure authors out there with games on the PAW, GAC, Quill and so on. The latest issue debuts a column on the new Amstrad CPC adventure creation system called ADLAN as well as an interview with Tom Frost, whose Gordello Incident was recently reviewed in TGM.

Over in the States, I have heard from Eagle Tree Software who have produced a unique chess game which traces the history of chess over the last thousand years. Rules, hints and tips are included for games from India, Burma, China, Europe and the Middle East. You can play solo, two-player or watch a computer vs computer game. 2-D and 3-D views and hint modes are available.

In addition to Koei's well-received Romance of the Three Kingdoms (reviewed last month), Koei have two further games available, both based on historical fact. Nobunaga's Ambition sees you struggling to become Shogun as you take the part of a Daimyo (a sort of military baron or warlord) during Japan's 16th century, warring states period. Gengis Khan, however, has you either as the man himself destroying, assassinating, pillaging, seducing and generally having a whale of a time or one of several other rulers who prevailed at the time (eg,



Richard the Lionheart). Both games look to be up to Koei's very high standards.

Scoop, from Spinnaker software, resembles a Sierra or Lucasfilm game as you move your character around the screen in an effort to solve a murder case. Set in London, with over 80 locations, you use menus to question suspects whose close-up portrait appears onscreen at the same time. In a similar way to Killed until Dead, the suspects register their emotions in response to your line of questioning.

Springboard Software have just converted Hidden Agenda from the Apple Mac to the PC. Having just assumed the role of a Central American revolutionary leader you must appoint a cabinet, bargain, negotiate, compromise, and deal with diplomats and journalists while trying to improve your economy and lead your country to prosperity.

Big news from Maxis software is the sequel to Sim City. It will either be called Sim Planet or Sim Earth — which gives you an idea of the scope it will cover. Designer Will Wright hopes to take the detail down to city level but no decision has been made whether to allow manipulation of the city as in Sim City. Cities should be portable from Sim City to Sim Planet/Earth. That's not all though, because Sim Planet/Earth will also cover evolution, historical events and continental drift! Maxis are also hoping to present an on-line version which will be networked around the States.

Incidentally, MicroProse are said to be working on an on-line game system to be designed by Dan Bunten of MULE and Modem Wars fame. A further MicroProse rumour concerns a fellow named Sandy Peterson. Sandy may be familiar to those of you who have played the tabletop Cthulu RPGs as he was a game module designer for Chaosium. As Sandy has moved to their hallowed halls are we to expect a horror game from MicroProse?

Watch out for Mechwarrior from Activision which features a first person perspective view of solid 3-D Mech combat and RPG play. You control 70 tons of pure mechanised muscle and are the leader of the Blazing Aces, a mercenary mech-outfit which is for hire by any of the five successor states. Mechwarrior is a tale of revenge (for your dead father) and the dreaded Dark Wing, scourge of the Inner Sphere.

Well, that's all for this month. Have a nice decade.

PC £39.95

MANHOLE

Activision

Many of you will be familiar with the general aspects of this game from when it appeared on the Apple Mac. The first leisure application of the HyperCard environment, Manhole was produced as a pilot project to test and research new ideas, to boldly go... etc. However, this conversion takes you from the black and white Mac to the glory of 256 colours on your VGA PC and very nice it looks too!

For those of you who may have missed it first time around, Manhole drops you in a sort of fantasy land where just about anything can happen. It is the interface that gives the game its open-ended play. For example, on opening a draw which proved empty, I clicked on it. A keyboard appeared which could then be played. The PC's speaker is used mainly for digitised speech which has been implemented via Activision's Omnimusic system. The quality, though, is surprisingly good. Speaking about music, the program includes support for Roland and AdLib sound cards. They are used sparingly but to good effect in selected areas — such as that keyboard in the drawer.

Activision have classed Manhole as a 'Fantasy Exploration for Children of All Ages'. This is a wise move as there are no puzzles or gameplay provided and 40 quid for a pleasant stroll is pushing it for 'grown-ups'. It is probably suited more towards children, being an excellent tool for computer familiarization while also being a confidence builder. As this is a rather unique product I will not give it a rating but recommend it to parents everywhere for their children's enjoyment.

GOLDEN SCROLL

C64 (also Amiga, ST & PC)

KNIGHTS OF LEGEND

Origin



There can be no doubt that Origin are the Kings of the RPG. Knights of Legend (KOL) not only re-enforces that fact but introduces an RPG of unparalleled depth, exceeding even Ultima V, which will be heartily welcomed by any RPG aficionado. In fact KOL is only the beginning. Once you have played through the variety of quests in this scenario (Astalarea) you will be able to purchase further scenarios which Origin are planning. There are at least four modules on the drawing board.

There is no way I will be able to cover the immense depth of this game (which comes on four disks and includes a map and a 142-page manual) in the limited space available so here are a few salient points.

Creating your character, you can choose from a wide variety of races and classes (36 different ones each with their own skills and advantages). Next step is to create your figure — a graphic depicting yourself. There is a mini-paint routine (including palette and brushes) with which you can modify the character. The same can be done for your heraldic shield. You control six characters in your party.

An excellent attribute (there are seven primary attributes) system includes quickness (reflexes), size (affects choice of armour), foresight (sixth sense) plus three secondary attributes. There is an incredible depth to armour and weapon selections. You'd think 54 different weapons and nine classes would be enough. But no, you can even ask the blacksmith to specially design a weapon to your instructions! There are nine types of armour, which can be specially fitted. Each type is divided up into sections to cover various parts of the body.

Weapons and armour (as well as the rest of your inventory) can be seen to be fitted on a full-screen representation of your character.

The game world is represented in different scales, but they are generally the Ultima-type look down view. However, when you approach a house or castle, a full screen graphic of the building appears. Talking to characters will produce a first-person facial graphic. Interaction is similar to Ultima V's excellent system of using keywords to ask questions.

Again, the combat routine is of the very highest order. The best system on the market today. There are 36 combat actions you can take. You can aim for various parts of the body, use different attack forms (thrust, head-butt, hack, etc), evasion tactics (jump, dodge, etc). Fatigue plays a big part and wounds come in different forms.

Magic is extremely comprehensive as you create and name your own spells! With each spell you must specify the race of the enemy, indicate what effect you want it to have, its severity, the spell's duration and the enemy's sub-class (what type of dwarf, for example).

In return for the quests (and sub-quests) you will receive a medal which will help you rise up through the 25 different ranks.

I admit to being truly staggered at the level of detail and depth achieved by Knights of Legend. No other RPG approaches it. It might sound too complicated to play but Origin provide a range of easy to use icons which replace potentially puzzling menus. Buy it and kiss goodbye to your social life.



PC £24.95

PRESUMED GUILTY

Cosmi/Electronic Zoo

Presumed Guilty is Cosmi's follow-up to their curious The President is Missing (distributed via Electronic Zoo). Like the original, the sparse documentation is accompanied by a cassette which contains intelligence data, radio intercepts, wiretaps and so on. A good vehicle to enhance the atmosphere for the game.

Working as a COPNET (Computer Operated Police Network) agent you are involved in some preliminary investigations of the death of a SDI research computer programmer, Ray Lamonte. Murder turns into conspiracy but when you become implicated as Lamonte's murderer you realise that if you don't solve this case quickly you will never see mama's apple pie again. All your actions are completed via the computer terminal. You access the COPNET computer, receive information on suspects, photographs and so on. You also get a chance to compare DNA patterns from samples found at various sites. While you are doing this you will be taunted on the network by the Falcon (the villain of the peace). Once he finds your network password it's curtains for you — so it's a race against time.

This could have been a good game if the design and production wasn't so poor. To begin with, the installation routine for the hard disk doesn't work. I mentioned this to Electronic Zoo who will now include an erratum note in the box. However, Electronic Zoo shouldn't have to be picking up the pieces for Cosmi. In addition, you must save the game via a convoluted method. The trouble is that the restore routine doesn't work either!

The game itself has its faults. Because it employs a real time system you tend to have quite a bit to do initially and then too many periods of pure boredom while you wait for something to happen. Then there is a mind-numbing game noise which is incessant and is impossible to turn off. There's a good game in there somewhere but faced with the bugs and poor design I think the majority of players will give up trying to find it.





PC (also Amiga, ST) £24.99

DON'T GO ALONE

Accolade

Don't Go Alone is a rather simple RPG set in an old house. You must control a party of four through ten levels of the house until you reach the head baddie, whom you must despatch. The usual set of attributes are extended by two unusual ones, fear and concentration. The former will increase after experiencing monsters for a length of time, upon which you become immobilised. The latter is an indication of how successfully you can launch 'spells'. Actually, they are rather more modern than that. You must rustle up a potion, constructed by individual atomic elements, to form your required potion. Now you know why you can have a chemist in your party.

Combat is simple but well balanced. Either attack a creature or launch a potion. Only one person can fight at a time which is an unnecessary drawback. Graphics are pretty good throughout with one or two very nice animation effects. Similarly, PC sound is effectively enhanced by via support from Games Blaster and AdLib soundboards. At the top of the screen is a very useful, and well presented, auto-mapping feature which saves time and frustration — especially for those who hate mazes.

Which is all well and good but for the fact that there is very little to do in Don't Go Alone except kill monsters. There are no puzzles to speak of so events become rather tedious after a while. Saying that, though, it may be attractive to the beginner as it is well presented and easy to play.



PC £24.95

MINES OF TITAN

Activision

This is like a scene from an old Agatha Christie novel, but here goes, anyway. Ahem.

Snooper of the Yard paced the carpet of the sullen drawing room. The seated guests watched intently as he, deep in thought, mused over the problem. Of the six people in the room, one was a fake, that was for sure. That person had forged a brilliant plan. A plan which would ultimately change their whole appearance, even their own friends would never guess. But who cou... Snooper turned suddenly and homed into one individual. 'You!' he cried, 'you thought you could get away with it but I have seen through your little game! Mr Minesoftitan, you were very clever changing the packaging, the box, the name and even altering the plot, but I put it to you that your real name is, in fact, Mars Saga!'

Gasps from around the room, etc etc. Yes folks, Westwood Associates have taken their old Electronic Arts, C64 game Mars Saga, repackaged it for Infocom and renamed it Mines of Titan for the PC. But, despite the deception it is still a good RPG. You have to find a lost city, of all things. A multi-character game with excellent Laser Squad-type combat routines, Mines of Titan is still well worth adding to the collection.



PC £29.99

SWORD OF THE SAMURAI

MicroProse

In Sword of the Samurai, MicroProse appear to have taken the general principles found in Pirates! and applied them to a RPG/strategy game set in feudal Japan. The basic Pirates! text menus and graphic windows are retained and have been successfully implemented.



You begin, at the age of 15, as the new head of one of the leading samurai families in the clan. As such, you have control of villages and land (your fief) from which you receive tax and a small army of lesser samurai. As well as defending your fief and keeping the peasants happy your initial aim is to become the hatamoto lord (who rules the clan area) via honest or more devious methods. Once you've done that you step up into the advanced game in which you try to take the majority of the 48 provinces to become Shogun (who is only accountable to the Emperor himself).

Designer Lawrence Schick has developed a game of great depth. It runs against a pleasing backdrop of Japanese art and music. The supported Roland and AdLib cards perform the Japanese-style music well adjusting the mood of the tracks depending upon what actions you are taking. During close combat scenes you can hear grunts of effort from the combatants.

Sword of the Samurai uses a number of sub-games to achieve the variety of play in a similar way to Pirates! You can face (sword in hand) an opponent in a arcade-style combat scene, control your army against the foe in a wargame scene as well as rescuing fair maidens from castles in an overhead Ultima-type RPG sequence.

As can be expected, each individual sub-game is not the best in its class but they are very credible, nevertheless. The wargame sequence, for example, uses unique mouse-driven commands involving clicking and dragging, while a variety of modifiers enhance gameplay such as morale, tactical formations, unit types, terrain effects and so on. It is the joining of all the sub-games, political intrigue and economic management that makes this game so enthralling. Add that lot to MicroProse's usual dedication to realism — the result of honest research — and you get a game that will prove totally addictive.





DELUXE ACTION FROM NINTENDO



How do you fancy winning a fabulous Nintendo Deluxe Set (complete with Super Mario Bros II, Robo Warrior, Duck Shoot, Lightgun and Robbie the robot) and a copy of Top Gun and Rush 'n' Attack? Of course you do, and it couldn't be easier with TGM. Simply send your name and address along with the prices of the three Nintendo Sets to: Nintendo Comp, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. **Simple isn't it. The first correct card out of the bag on February 8 wins the complete system.**

Green and ple

You could have been forgiven for thinking that Gremlin had left the computer entertainment field and concentrated on other lu crative areas — you'd be very wrong. For 1990 sees a resurgence in Gremlin product, with new offices, different directors and better games. Mark Caswell trekked up to their brand spanking new offices in Sheffield and found an old friend under a new guise...

The creators of the Monty Mole games have hit a bit of a quiet patch recently, but they are back! The first game that catches the eye as we enter their squeaky clean offices is the sequel to the controversial Federation of Free Traders. Sneakily titled BSS Jane Seymour, it is in fact the further missions of FOFT. BSS Jane Seymour is named after a huge Biological Survey Ship sent out to explore the cosmos, to seek out new life and civilisations and to boldly go where no man has gone before...

Unfortunately, a defective light jump took the ship too close to the Wolf-Raert Star which resulted in the ship being subjected to a deadly dose of radiation. Some of the crew died of radiation poisoning, those who survived went completely mad and lost all control of the ship. The radiation explosion not only affected the BSS Jane Seymour but also the surrounding cosmos. Subsequently, the aliens are out for revenge and the present crew aren't in much shape to defend themselves. It is into this scene that you walk. You take the role of a brave commander in the intergalactic space fleet. Your mission is to dock with the Seymour, assess the situation and act accordingly.

The game is viewed through the player's eyes and it soon becomes apparent what your mission is: repair the damaged systems, capture the aliens who have overrun your ship and restrain the mad members of the crew. Take care as you move through the ship, decide what's useful, pick up the essential and ignore the obvious red herrings. Some of the rooms in which tasks must be performed are highly radioactive, this is where one of your three robots comes in useful. Each is togged up with the right equipment and more than willing to help you with your life-saving mission.

BSS Jane Seymour features 20 levels of play, 200K of sampled sound effects, over one hundred rooms across three decks and 30 alien creatures. There's so much to do and so little time to do it in. Sadly, no 8-bit versions are planned as yet, but 16-bit ones should be out in March.



Roborod?

For many years the computer has been programmed to entertain the player, but in Gremlin's Ramrod you are asked to entertain the computer. You choose to amuse either the hunky hero himself (who looks not dissimilar to RoboCop) or his tough robotic pal, Rambot. Your chosen man then enters a large play area where it is up to you to keep him occupied. A bore-o-meter in the status panel slowly rises if you leave your robot idle for too long.

Luckily there are loads of things to do that keep 'rod' or 'bot' happy. For example find the CD player, now find a decent CD, put the two together and the resulting racket will occupy our metallic friend for a while. Another way to keep him from reaching for the Tom Jones records is by shooting the odd spheres that appear. Your firepower is initially pretty impressive but can be increased more by picking up bonus objects with affect the type of missile fired. Also scattered around the floor are glistening coins which must be obtained for completion of





■ Help the fly to beat the swatters in Venus *above* and *mid right*. Is Jane Seymour the inspiration for the continuing saga of FOFT *top middle* and *top right*? Ramrod is the sort of chap we wouldn't like to leave sitting around, but as you can see he is up to his neck in trouble *mid right*. And vintage action with that lovable Monty mole *centre*.

easant land



the game. The coins come in handy when visiting one of the four arcades dotted around the landscape. The arcade games are shoot-'em-ups, all of which have to be mastered within a set time limit before progression to the next world (there are four in all).

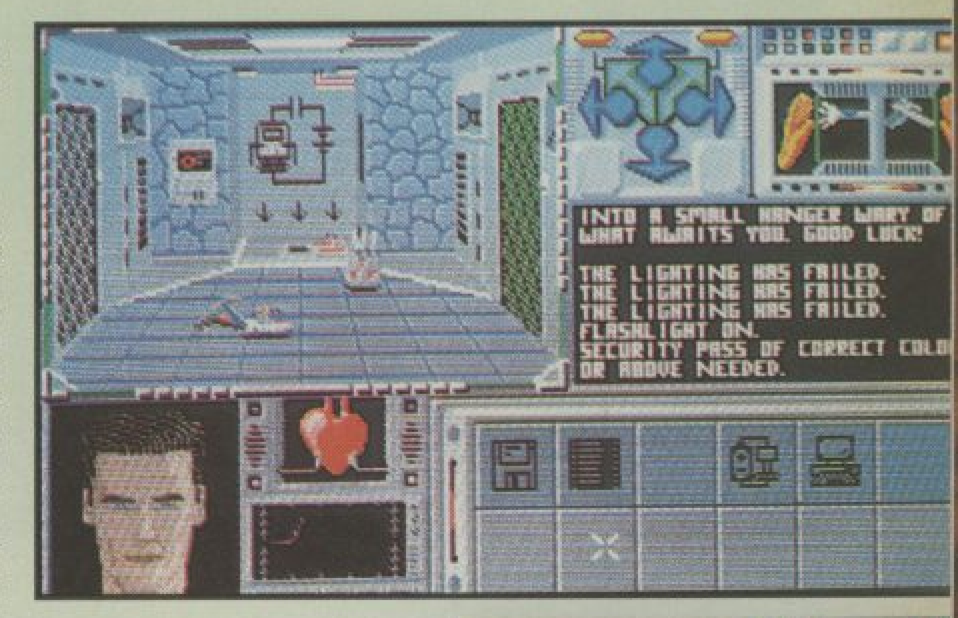
Ramrod is scheduled for a February release, with formats yet to be decided.

Goddess of love

As we walk through the Gremlin chambers, the next screens to catch the eye are those of Venus — with programmers still hard at work on it! It's a very attractive platform game in which you control an armoured fly who walks and bounces around the scenery. (He's too burdened with weapons to fly around.) The gameplay's simple: survive. It's all very well preaching it but practice is a little tougher as the local denizens aren't too happy with all your stomping around. Venus should (if the programmers finish it in time) be in the shops soon, along with Super Cars (reviewed this issue) and Skidz.

Skidz will be the most radical game to hit your computer this year (it's true! they told me so). Being a member of the 'trendy' brigade, you can cruise the streets on either a skateboard or a BMX bike. Whatever you choose, the aim is simple: to be the hippest kid in town. There are seven areas to race through, including Streets, Parks, Canal Way and China Town. Each level has its own distinctive graphics with tasks which must be completed for progression to the next level. But being such a rad lad you won't be able to pass up the opportunity to pull some stunts, will you? Watch out for Skidz on the streets very soon.

And as we leave the building, Gremlin shout of news of a sidecar racing game called Combo Racer. Seems like it'll be ready for March. Sounds like another winner from the guys with green fingers...

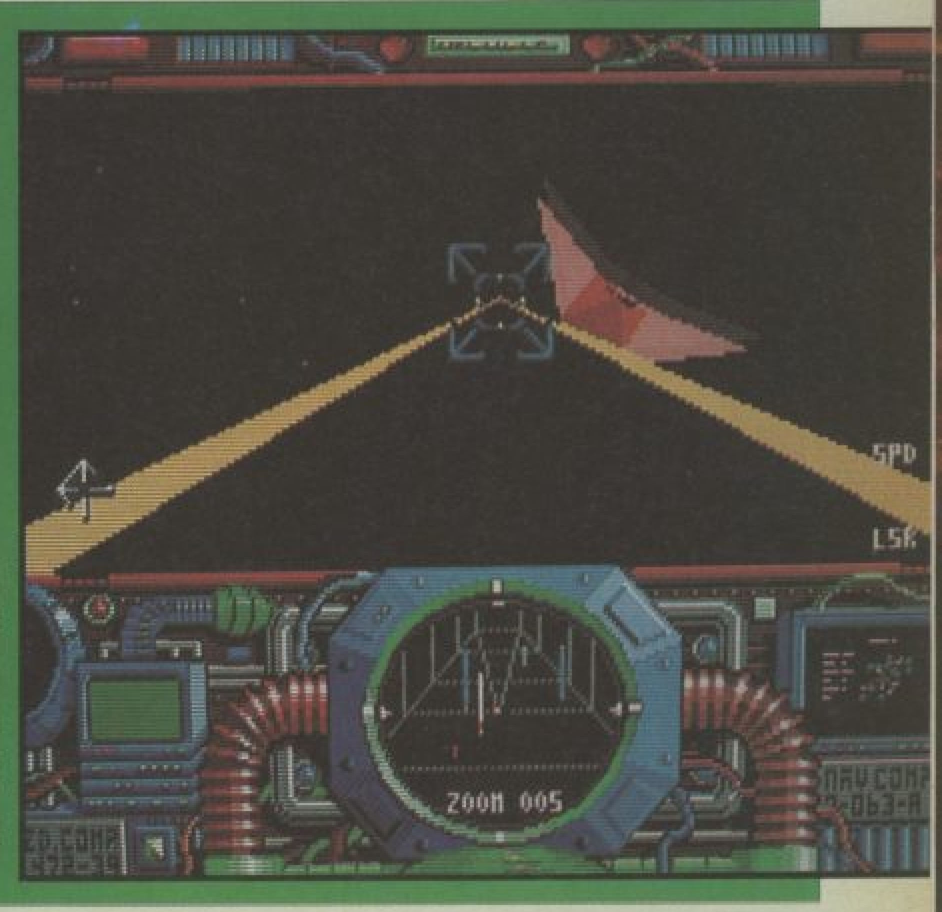


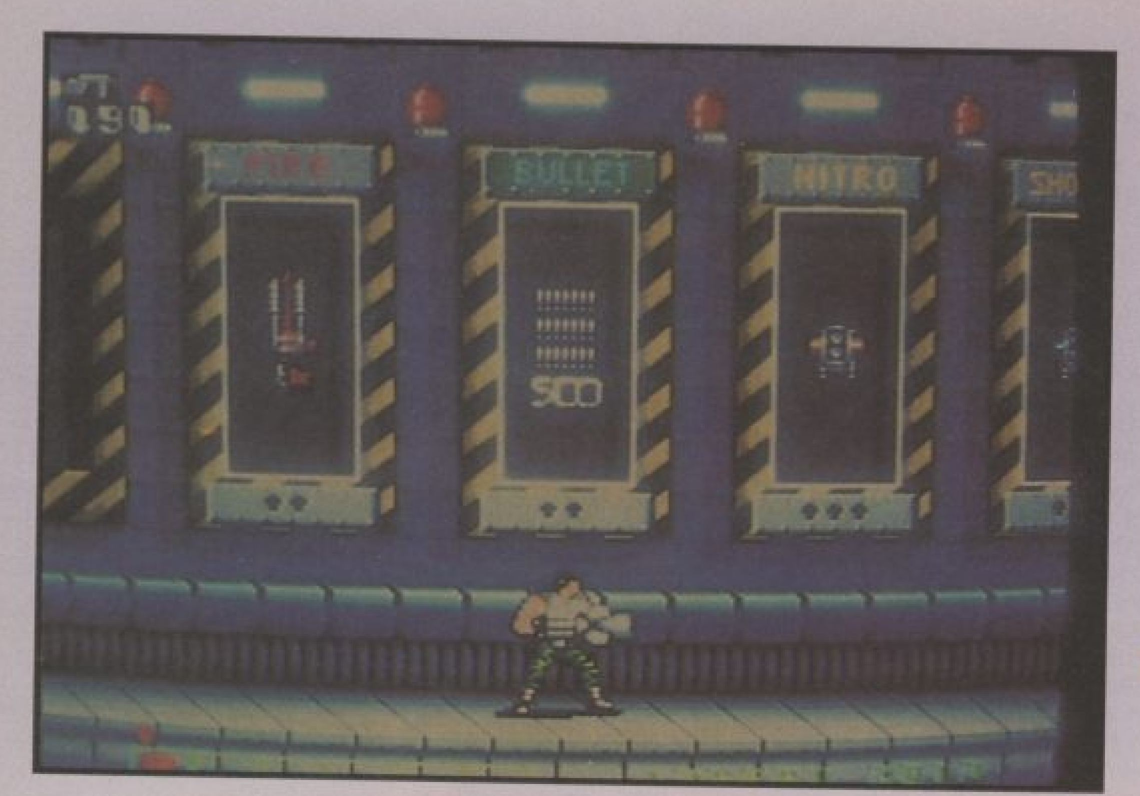




A quick history

Gremlin had one of their busiest years in 1988. There was the lucrative Walt Disney licence, Magic Bytes, Federation of Free Traders... The list of front page story material could go on. But after the release of FOFT — and its disappointing reviews and subsequent poor sales — the green monsters from Birmingham made some radical changes to their operation. Company director and founder, Ian Stewart bought out fellow directors Anne and Geoff Brown (founders and still directors of US Gold) picked up the whole operation and took it back to its roots in Sheffield. In 1989 they went into hibernation, planned for the future and are now ready to reveal what they have in store for us in 1990.





ARCADE ALLEY

WITH MARK CASWELL

SPECIAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS
TAITO

So you thought you'd heard the last of Chase HQ — think again! Just after you took delivery of the computer version of Chase HQ, what should arrive in the arcades but Special Criminal Investigations — the sequel. Poor old Nancy's been given the boot but her similarly sexy-voiced counterpart ain't too bad either. Gone too is the black sports car, to be replaced by a slinky new red one. However, the basic formula is the same.

Tony Gibson and Ray Brody leap into their car, tear down the freeway at suicidal speeds (the turbo charger is still in operation) and smash into the villains' vehicle when identified by the huge red pointer. The sequel has added adversaries in the form of bodyguarding bikers who defend Mr Big with relish.

But what makes Special Criminal Investigations different to Chase is Mr Brody's ability to stick his head out of the sunroof and take potshots at the criminals with his Colt automatic. The two buttons in the centre of the steering wheel make Ray pop his head up, but the pea shooter he uses is useless — bar the obvious satisfaction value.

Also on your side is a friendly helicopter which occasionally hovers over and drops a limited ammo bazooka which does a helluva lot of damage.

There aren't that many differences between this and Chase HQ but the gameplay's great and so are the graphics and music. You can't ask for much more, can you?

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
DATA EAST

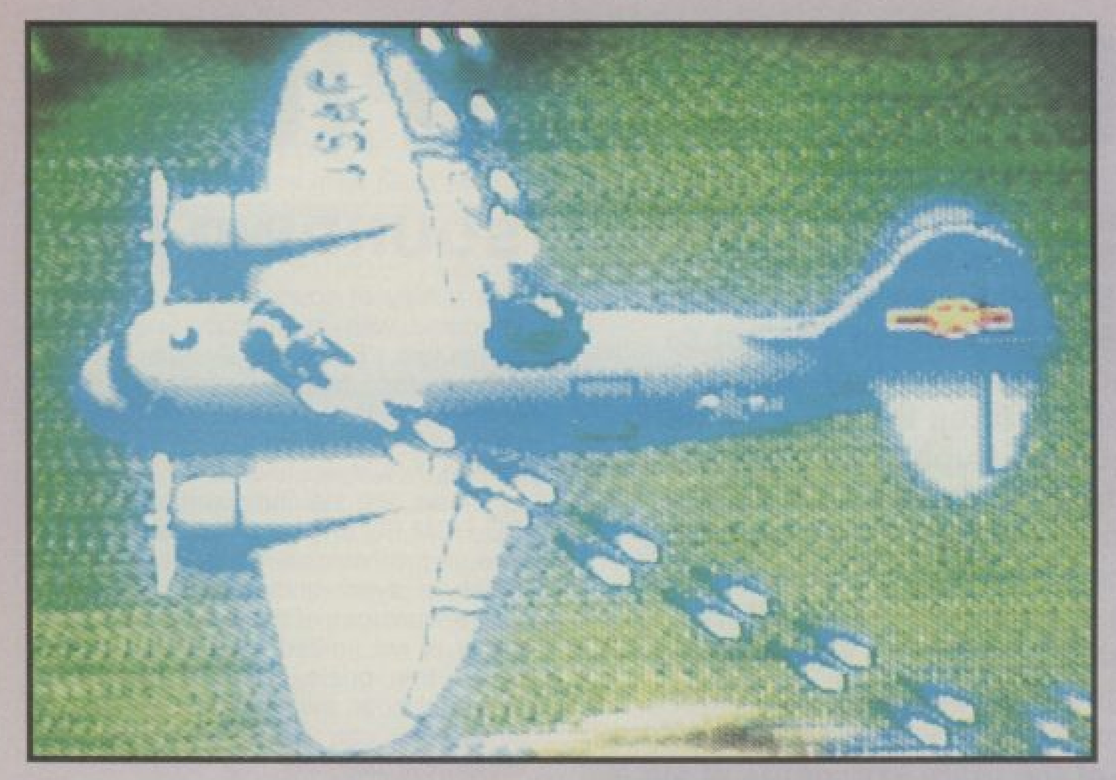
You can never rely on coin-ops for original storylines. Cue one or two butch hero types with designer stubble, armed to the teeth, and breaking into an enemy stronghold to kick the crap out of its inhabitants. You enter the fray on the bonnet of a Land Rover driven by a young lady. Your gal doesn't hang around for too long and you're soon up against the marauding hordes (here we go again).

Foot soldiers appear with an assortment of weapons, ranging from a fairly feeble pistol to an infuriating machine gun nest. Other guys appear in armoured vehicles and helicopters just to add to the fun. Although you can absorb a certain amount of punishment, you will die if too many bullets bounce off your manly chest.

On destruction, enemy troops leave behind credit cards. These come in useful when entering the enemy's munition stores at the end of each level. Here a range of weapons, ammo and super power-ups for the already devastating weapons can be purchased (providing you have the credit, of course). Basically it's a no-frills shoot-'em-up, that graphically isn't any great shakes but has playability to last half an hour or so.

X-MULTIPLY
IREM

Before I start I must point out that this isn't R-Type II, though it does look very similar. No game plot is apparent, just annihilation



of the alien waves with a range of large and lethal weapons.

As you blast through the many levels be sure to pick up the glowing orbs which increase fire power. A devastating array of armoury is available, ranging from bombs to lasers and an impressive pair of whip-like tentacles.

The battle is a tough one, and when the end of a level is reached there remains just one more larger alien to be conquered — so be sure to collect EVERY orb you see.

Graphically, X-Multiply is very nice, with a wide range of bug-eyed monsters rampaging across beautifully detailed Gigeresque backdrops. There are plenty of these space shoot-'em-up games around, and X-Multiply adds little more to the experience.

TOKI
TAD CORPORATION

Toki is a very playable, typically cutesy Japanese platform game. Our hero is an ape who has to rescue his girlfriend from an evil enemy. However, our hero didn't start out as an ape. As a young man he was transformed into a primate while trying to rescue his girlfriend from being kidnapped. Understandably, he's out for revenge.

Luckily, you don't carry a wimpy gun around to destroy the baddies, you are a very anti-social person who spits at his attackers. Various bonus objects are scattered around the place, including crash helmets, fiery breath and limited invincibility. The Japanese love this game type, and although it hasn't really caught on in Britain, Toki is worth a look.



CALIBRE .50
SETA CORP

In 1972 a fighter pilot was shot down over enemy held territory in Vietnam, several years later a team of crack commandos (no, not the A-Team) rescued him from a prisoner of war camp. On your way back, the rest of your 'crack' commando group are wiped out, only you are left to help take your fellow American back for some good ol' home cooking. But the locals are still on your back and there's no time to waste.

Grab a gun and a handful of grenades and get ready for some Ikari Warriors-style multi-directional scrolling action. A fast trigger finger is needed as the bloodthirsty rabble attack from all sides. You can prevent the enemy from sneaking up behind you with a twist of the joystick knob, which quickly turns you around.

Grenades and ammo are limited, but fear not because crates yield ammo, grenades and extra weapons when blown open. The weapons include machine guns, rocket launchers and a very nifty flame thrower. And you can rest assured that plenty of itchy trigger work is needed to destroy the foot soldiers, helicopter gunships and tanks that stand between you and freedom. As violent games go, this is pure and simple unadulterated mayhem. Recommended.



Many thanks go to Kevin Williams at Electrocoin for the use of the machines.

Heard it all, Dunn it all

Take a trip back to 1984 when the Spectrum was the hottest computer around and the Sinclair QL was going to be 'the next big thing'. Computer music was limited to sporadic beeps or the occasional catchy tune on the C64. The problem was not so much the limitations of the sound chips but rather that games were one man productions and all too often the programmers had very little musical knowledge. Rob Hubbard was responsible for changing that with catchy title tunes for C64 games like Monty On The Run and Crazy Comets. Software houses found that music sold games and the computer musician was born. These days games programming is no longer a solo effort. Programmers take care of the maths and make sure that everything fits together; graphic designers ensure that the game looks stunning; and computer musicians try to grab your attention with marvellous music. One of the main exponents of such music is Ocean's Jonathan Dunn. Robin Candy took a trip to Manchester to discuss computers and music...

JD: 'After leaving school I went to college and studied music technology. At the time I wanted to get into studio work and do something like engineering. But it's very hard to get into and before I had a chance to try I realised that I could make money writing music for computer games.

'I wasn't initially attracted to computers by the music possibilities but rather the technology itself. I used to sit at home programming. I originally used to program games but I didn't have much success with them. Then I bought a few music packages and started dabbling about with them. I then gave up on programming games and channeled what little programming knowledge I did have towards music.

'Initially I started writing music for games on a freelance basis. I sent off demos of my work to various software houses. The first program I worked on was Subterrean [now out on the Hewson budget label, Rack-It]. But before I got the chance to do anything else I was offered a full-time job at Ocean. So I dropped everything and came up to Manchester, where I've been for about two years."

RC: 'So how do you go about creating music for games?'

JD: 'When I'm working on an original project I usually start by planning out ideas on a Korg M1 keyboard. The keyboard's got its own built-in sequencer but I prefer to use Pro 24 on the ST. I know basically what sort of music is going to suit a particular section of a game and I can play in that style. Once I've found a sound on the keyboard that I like, I can work behind that and build up a tune.

'With arcade conversions, the original music is usually quite good so we like to stick with that. Whatever company that we license the game from actually sends us the music score. It gets quite difficult to convert at some points because there are times when there are maybe five or more parts to the music which you obviously can't reproduce on a three-channel sound chip. So basically you're trying to arrange the music into a form which is as close to the original as possible.'

RC: 'Yeah, transferring original scores is all very well, but it's a lot better to compose your own music, isn't it?'

JD: 'Mmmm... I prefer to work on original games where I've got more freedom and can write my own music. It many ways it is easier than working on converting someone else's music, it's certainly a lot more interesting.

'The main restriction when writing the music is memory, then processing time. This is a big problem on the ST where you can use samples but sometimes there just isn't the necessary processing time

SOUNDING OFF

The quality of sound chips has steadily improved with the introduction of new computers. Both the Amiga and the Archimedes feature excellent sound chips which rival the quality of many low-cost synthesizers. But CD-ROM has presented us with an alternative to computer music, the synchronised soundtrack. CD-ROM PC Engine games already feature a professional soundtrack on CD which is synchronised with the game. The advantages of this are that the composer is not limited by memory restrictions, the quality of the computer's sound chip or the number of channels, since they can use whatever musical equipment they like.

JD: 'I would imagine at some point that you're going to be able to produce that sort of quality from a sound chip anyway. The prices of good keyboards are already dropping. You now get keyboards with built-in sequencers and effects selling for prices which would have been unheard of five years ago. So I would imagine that the prices would continue to drop to a point where it would be feasible to put better sound chips with more channels in computers while keeping the price of the overall unit low.'

THE SOUND INVESTMENT

Acorn Archimedes
16 channels (eight left and eight right). Six-octave range. Two built-in speakers (not very good quality) but output is available through the monitor. Excellent sound quality, probably the best on any home computer.

Amstrad CPC
Uses the popular AY 3-8921A sound chip. It's three channel, plays across eight octaves and the sound is output through the speaker. The sound quality is reminiscent of early arcade machines.

Atari ST
As the Amstrad range. Built-in MIDI ports greatly expands the ST's musical potential

Commodore Amiga
Uses a chip called Paula. It's four-channel, plays over a nine octave range with stereo output to a TV/monitor or hi-fi. Capable of running good quality samples.

Commodore 64
Probably the best sounding eight-bit computer. Uses the 6581 SID chip (Sound Interface Device). It produces three channels of sound and has a range of eight octaves. Output is through the TV or monitor.

Sinclair Spectrum
16K/48K/48K+ models use a one-channel buzzer, output via built-in speaker. By far the worst sound on a popular home computer. All other models also feature the AY 3-8921A which can be used in conjunction with the buzzer, producing pieces better than the ST!

IBM PC/compatibles
Normally one-channel buzzer, but (depending on the producer) the speed of the processor allows pseudo-three-channel sound to be produced, though its poor quality. Not designed as a music machine. However, sound expansions boards are available — like the Ad-Lib board and Roland's LAPC-1 (see last issue) — which pull the sound up to Amiga standard and higher. Most games support such cards.

HOW IT'S DUNN

Steinberg Pro 24

Jonathan composes on a Korg M1 synthesizer using Steinberg's Pro 24 run on the Atari ST.

Pro 24 is one of the industry standard sequencers used by professionals and carries a professional price tag of £300. As its name suggests, it is 24-track sequencer. This seems very limiting when you bear in mind that over the past year a new generation of sequencers have been launched which can cope with up to 256 tracks of information. But Pro 24 bypasses this problem with a mix-down option. This merges several tracks together. The new track will play back with all the different parts sent to different MIDI channels just like they were on separate tracks. So, in theory, you can keep bouncing tracks together ad infinitum — without any loss of sound quality.

Your music can be represented in a variety of ways, including graphic blocks, a datastream (a bit unfriendly to use since all note information is shown as numbers) and a rudimentary form of music notation.

If you own this you are unlikely to ever need or want another sequencer. There is a logical edit screen which can produce some very interesting functions. This allows you to carry out arithmetic operations on particular notes or MIDI events. First you define what part of a sequence is to be affected, such as all notes or notes within a particular range. You can then carry out a number of alterations on these notes, like altering the volumes, note lengths, note position etc. Basically you choose what aspect of a note you wish to alter then enter a number (such as increase/decrease value by three, multiply/divide value by four etc). Mucking about with this can create some very interesting music pieces, as well as a lot of rubbish. Quantising (correcting out of time keyboard play) is excellent with an option called Over Quantise which recognises your playing style and quantises accordingly.

Perhaps the most annoying aspect of Pro 24 is the options — there are just so many. It can take a good deal of time to find your way around the program even when using the manual. Beginners will almost certainly find it daunting to use. The price tag of £300 puts it beyond the means of budget conscious musicians so you have to be really serious about your music.

Korg M1

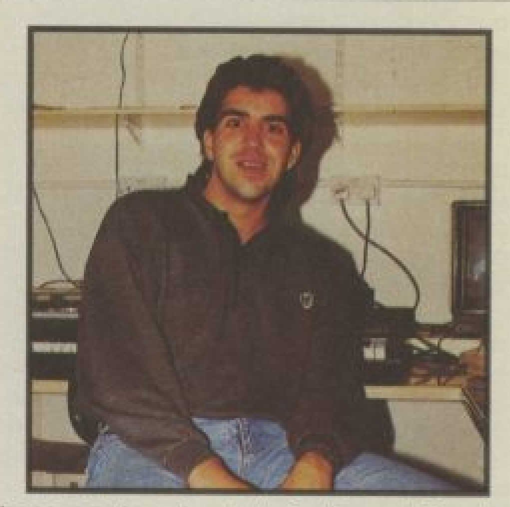
Every few years a new synthesizer arrives which anyone involved in music has just got to have. Yamaha's DX7 reigned supreme until the Roland D50 stole the limelight in 1986. These days the Korg M1 is *the* synth to own.

The M1 is one of the new breed of synthesizers known as workstations. These expensive machines (both the M1 and the Roland W30 workstations cost in the region of £1500) are complete setups with a built-in sequencer, generous amounts of polyphony, multi-timbral and their own digital effects processors. Buy one of these keyboards and you can write a song complete with drums, bassline, melody, chords, reverb, in fact just about anything else you want without having to use any extra equipment.

The preset sounds on the M1 are breathtaking. It uses a combination of synthesis and sample techniques. Synthesizer sounds are used to create the ethereal sounds while samples are used where the synthesized possibilities run out. That way you can play 'real' drums and pianos as well as hi-tech synth sounds.

One of the best aspects of the M1 is the built-in digital effects processor. This allows you to greatly alter the character of a sound by assigning an effect — reverb, delay, chorus — to it.

The M1 is an all-round great synth. The only real criticism is that you have to store sequences created with the internal sequencer on RAM card. (You could send the sequence out over MIDI to a computer-based sequencer and store the sequence on that, like Jonathan Dunn does, but if you buy a workstation you're normally trying to have to avoid the use of a computer and keep everything in one unit.) The RAM cards allow you load a sequence very quickly and they do allow you to store a lot of information on one card but they cost in the region of £90 — an expensive way of storing your songs.



because there's a lot of other stuff going on in the game. If this is the case you have to use standard AY [the ST sound chip] sounds which aren't as effective.

'I have to write specifically for each computer and that usually means having to do several different versions of the same music. The AY sound chip in the ST is a lot more restricting than the Paula chip in the Amiga but it is still possible to get some good sounds. The 128K Spectrums use the same sound chip but we've managed to combine the output from that with the output from the standard Spectrum buzzer. We run drum samples through the buzzer over the music from the AY chip. So you've effectively got another three channels. The only problem is that the output from the buzzer is a bit louder than the AY, but it's a lot better than working with just the standard buzzer.

'Once I'm happy with my music, I get Pro 24 to print out a copy of the music notation. I then enter the music into the computer as source code on our own development system. At the moment the development system is mainly for 8-bit stuff but it does get used on some 16-bit games. We're in the process of trying to set up a development system between the Amiga and the ST. It takes ages to transfer data from the ST to the Amiga just to test out a few routines.

'At the top of the source file you define all the note lengths in mathematical terms so that the computer can work out the different note lengths, such as crochets and quavers, relative to whatever your tempo setting is. You then type in the different sequences in assembler. You have to specify the pitch, the octave number and when the note is to played. There are two ways of specifying note lengths. You can specify that all the notes in a particular section are the same length or you can enter the lengths of each note individually. There's also another list where you specify the order in which to play the sequences. You get quite a complex language. That's basically the extent of my programming, though I have written some music drivers.

'The final stage is to take your samples. On the Amiga I use Audio Master 2 through the Future Sound sampler. All standard equipment. Sometimes we put the sound through a graphic equaliser to cut out the higher frequencies which we can't sample. The samples are normally taken from the M1 so that the music sounds similar to what I originally wrote. To make the music sound 'bigger' I sometimes sample whole chords for the backing rather than just single notes. You usually get better results using samples than spending time programming the sound chips, particularly with the Amiga — the downside is that they take up a lot of memory. On the Amiga version of Operation Thunderbolt we've got all the speech from the arcade machine and that takes up about 500K before being compressed.'

RC: 'Computers have really changed the face of music over the last ten years to a point where you no longer need to be a virtuoso to produce something quite complex. However, at the same time it has produced a backlash. Many a time the cry of 'the computer does it all for you, you haven't got any talent' has been heard.

JD: 'I like using computers because I don't consider myself to be a good keyboard player so it helps iron out mistakes. The one problem is that a lot of music produced by people who use computers tends to be a bit samey. But it's good from the point of view that someone without much understanding of musical theory can produce something that sounds professional. With computers there is much more emphasis on ideas rather than playing skills. It's just the professionals getting scared that's all.'

New musical express

Attention ST owners! There's a new sound add-on for your pride and joy. Stop Amiga owners taking the mick and check out the facts on FM Melody Maker, the latest sound enhancement system from Hybrid Arts...

Hybrid Arts are one of the big names in music software. They're soon to launch a sound editor which will work with just about any MIDI synthesizer and promises to be one of the best available. For a company that produces industry standard software, the FM Melody Maker is a departure from the norm. Clearly aimed at the beginner or occasional dabbler in computer music, the FM Melody adds a new sound chip to your ST as well as compositional software for just £69.95.

The FM Melody Maker is a multi-purpose hardware and software combination. The hardware cartridge contains the new sound chip which uses Frequency Modulation sound synthesis — this is exactly the same method of sound generation used by the Yamaha DX range of synthesizers, but it has been simplified somewhat. The chip is nine-note polyphonic as well as nine-part multi-timbral (so it can produce nine different sounds at a time). This is an improvement on the ST's sound chip which is only capable of producing three different sounds at a time. While the ST's sound suffers from being sent through a TV or monitor, the cartridge sends its sound output through two phono plugs to your hi-fi.

Teaming up the cartridge with the software effectively turns your ST into one of those all-singing, all-dancing, auto-accompaniment keyboards — the type that Casio and Yamaha sell for £150 or so.

Making music

The main feature of the program is the composition screen. Music is input using the mouse. You click on the note value or rest of your choice and then position it on a treble clef stave, bar markers are added automatically. Entering a long sequence of notes can be a bit tiresome but the upshot is that if you can't already read music notation this is a good way to go about familiarizing yourself with it.

Just below the note selection panel are icons for chords, repeats, key and time signatures. The software supports 13 different chord types. Once one has been selected you just click on the position on the stave where you wish the chord to be played. Simple.

All the music you enter on the stave forms the main melody of your composition. When you play it back, the computer automatically generates some backing tracks such as drums, bassline and counter melodies based on your music. The only real control you have over the accompaniment is to alter the style. There are 16 styles available, including waltz, latin, swing and disco. The style setting will also effect the way that your own melody line is played.

Of course all your music would rapidly start to sound the same if you couldn't alter the instruments used. A quick trip to the instrument assignment menu allows you to alter instruments used on the melody part (there are 78 instruments available) as well as each of the accompaniment parts (there are 15 instruments available). The sounds are mainly of the acoustic sort, there are a variety of string sounds, kotos, electric basses, vibes, etc plus some more ethereal sounding synths. For such a low cost unit some of the sounds are quite good but generally they suffer from being a bit tinny.

The options menu provides access to the other sections of FM Melody Maker. These are a drum grid editor, a MIDI recorder and an FM expander.

Phil Collins watch out!

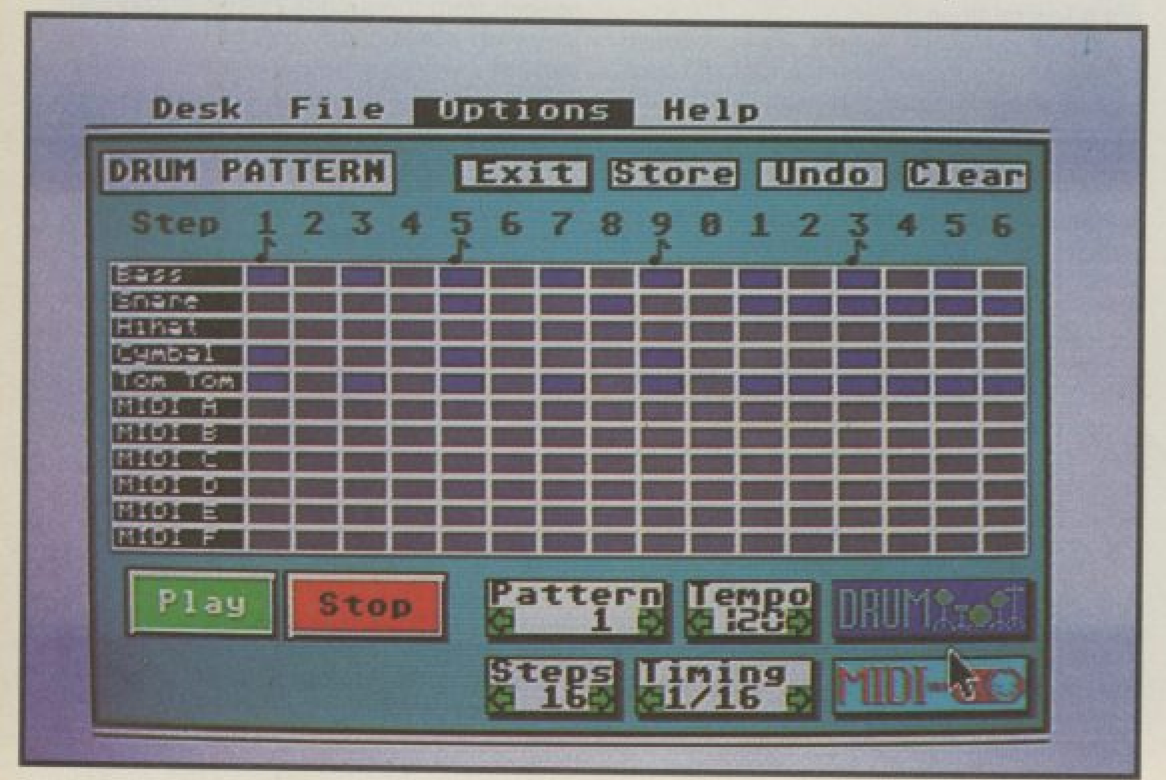
The drum grid editor allows you to construct your own drum patterns using the built-in drum sounds. There are five included — snare, bass, tom, hi hat and cymbal — but they are all a bit pathetic. However, six other sounds can be played over MIDI.

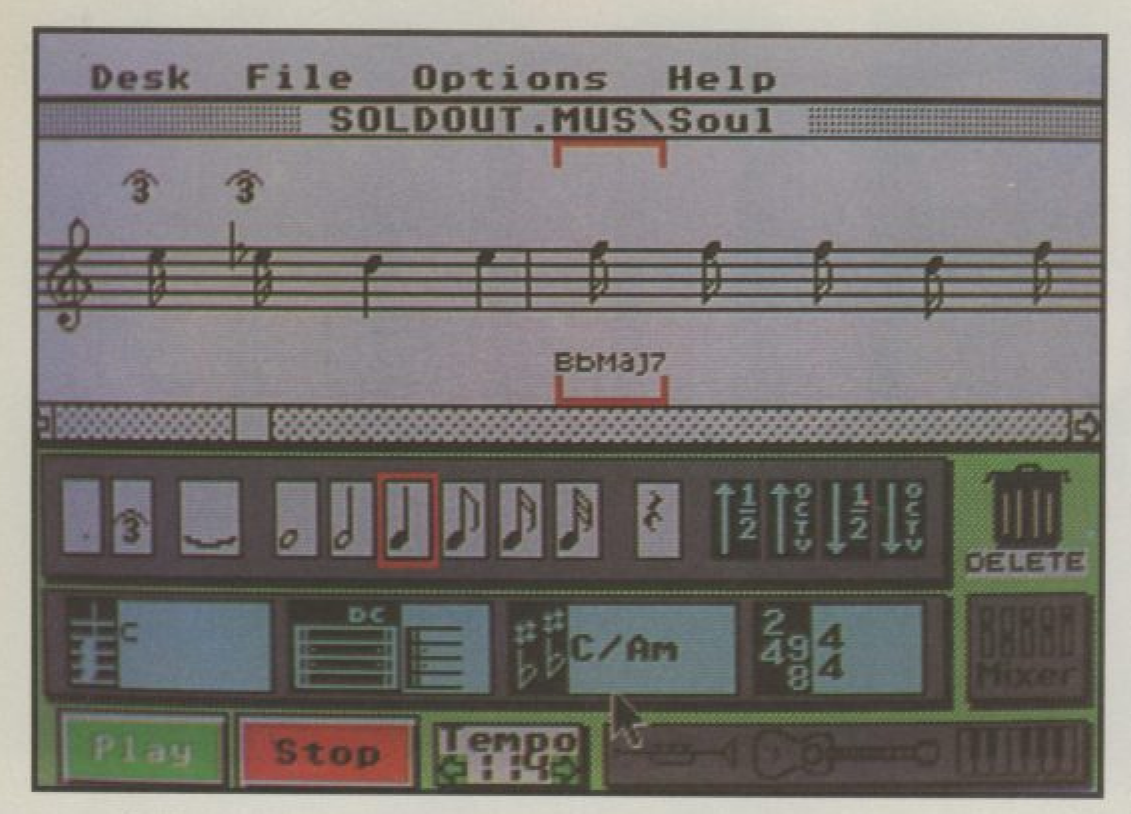
You compose your drum sequence using a drum grid. This is a grid which is divided into squares, each of which represents a particular time point in a bar. All you have to do then is to paint in where you want the drum sounds to be played. This is a great method of writing drum patterns especially if you're new to music and don't yet understand music notation. You can define up to 20 different bars of drum patterns which can then be arranged in any order you want.

The MIDI recorder is a very basic one channel MIDI sequencer. It's okay for quickly jotting down short music ideas but it doesn't really have many practical uses. It would have been better if you could record your MIDI sequence and include it into the composition. And that really is the biggest problem with the FM Melody Maker. It includes various modules for composing, sequencing and writing drum patterns but there is no way of linking all your work together. If you select the drum grid editor then your ST is turned into a drum machine and you can't play along your melody line at the same time. While if you're on the composition screen you can't include your own drum patterns within the accompaniment.

Multi-timbral ST

The final option is the FM expander. Basically this turns your ST into a nine part multi-timbral nine-note polyphonic synthesizer. Each channel responds to a different MIDI channel. To make use of the FM expander you need at least one MIDI keyboard but to get the most from it you need an external sequencer. Since





you probably want to use your ST to sequence, it means you're either going to have to invest in another computer, a MIDI keyboard with a built-in sequencer or a dedicated sequencer — a rather expensive solution to getting the most from a low cost add-on.

The FM Melody Maker tries to be all things musical without actually excelling in any of them. Its real strength lies in its ease of use. If you're new to computers and music, it's a great way of introducing yourself to the concepts used by more professional programs without actually taking the risk of spending hundreds of pounds on a hobby which you may not enjoy.

It's hard to tell whether the auto-accompaniment options are a plus or a minus. On one hand you want to have more control over what music the computer generates but on the other it's nice to only have to write a melody line and then playback something which sounds complete.

This would really have been a powerful unit had all the separate modules been integrated so that you could use your drum rhythms with your melody lines and input your melody lines from a MIDI keyboard. It would have also been nice had the software allowed you to sequence the nine FM channels from within the program rather than an external source. However, these are all problems with the software. Maybe Hybrid Arts will update the program but still use the same sound cartridge, allowing them to keep the price low. That would be a truly impressive package.

HYBRID ARTS: 24/26 Avenue Mews, Muswell Hill, London N10 3NP. Tel: (01) 883 1335.

The Games

machine

NEXT MONTH

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Due to the dynamic nature of the computer market we cannot guarantee that all the features mentioned above will appear next month. You can, however, be assured that anything missing from the above list will be replaced by something even better.

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